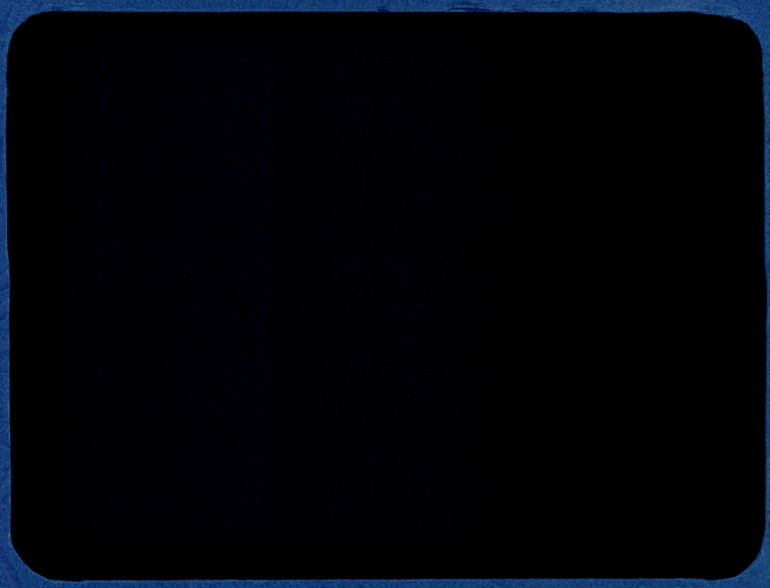

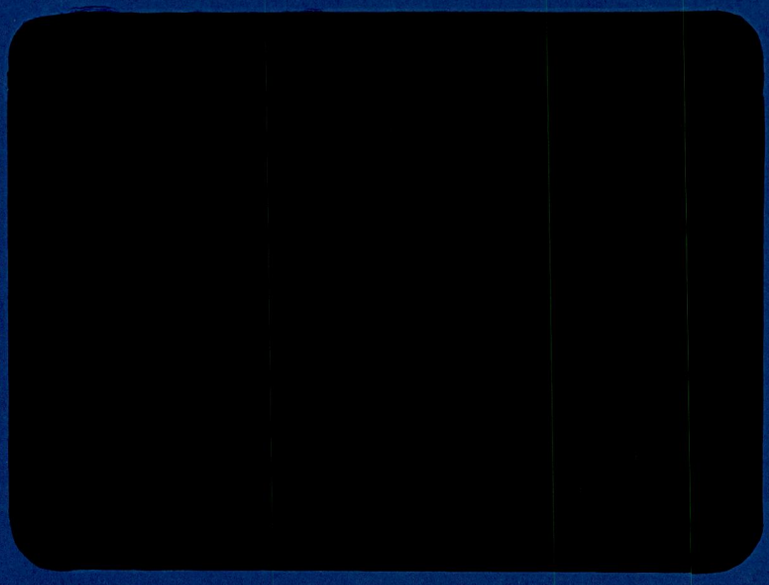

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

CRAFT, Ceramics

Stone as an expression of Zen in Japanese temple gardens

By

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Dedication

To My Brother Liam

(FRONTISPIECE: Mount Fuji from an 1831 Woodblock Print)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Dry Landscape of the To-Fuku-ji Zen Temple.

At the closing of the 15th century, Kyoto lay in ruins after the Onin war. Many temples and estates in Japan were abandoned and a silence had covered the land. However, out of this era of disarray, emerged a style of temple garden which may hold to be the most profound expression of Zen art; the dry landscape of Kare Sensui.

Fashioned from the most austere materials, sand and stone, these gardens were designed to be training grounds for the spirit, a device wherein the contemplative mind might reach out and touch the essence of Zen. (Fig.1).

"Stone as an expression of Zen in temple gardens" - is an attempt to trace the importance of stone as a symbolic material in the arts of Japan.

The opening of my study deals mainly with the religious background of Japan, discussing the arrival of Zen Buddhism, and the essence of Zen culture. Then in chapter two I give an appraisal for the dry landscape garden at Ryoan-ji in Kyoto, examining the use of space and its extreme simplicity.

In chapter three of my study, I continue with the use of stone as a symbolic material, I look at ancient Japanese mythology and trace the origins of Japanese symbolism.

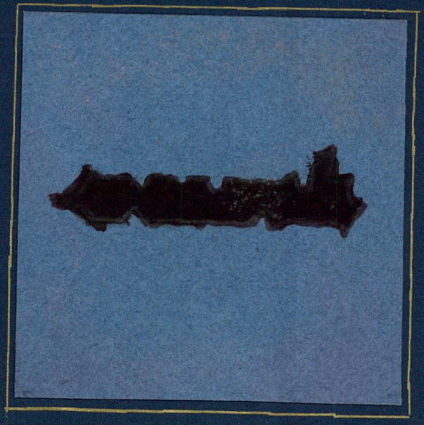
As a case study, I have chosen to include the Japanese Gardens at Tully in County Kildare, Ireland. In this fourth chapter I have been able to look at the gardens first hand, and through my research and photographs I intend to compare this western version with the original gardens at Kyoto.

In chapter five I have chosen to give an appreciation of the work of stone sculptor ISAMU NOGUCHI, (1904 -85). This section will be mainly dealing with Noguchi's use of stone and its hidden meanings. I will also discuss his public commissions and his designs for the dance theatre in which he uses the illusion of space and show how many of his philosophies are based on Zen culture.

Finally in chapter six, I discuss the importance of stone in Modern Architecture. In this chapter I also trace the impact of Japanese-style Architecture on the west and touch on the principles used by modern architect, Frank Lloyd Wright.

In my conclusions I intent to show how religious philosophies and ancient traditions have had a very strong influence on contemporary Japanese art. I will also trace how we in the west have gained by this cross-culturisation.

CHAPTER 1.



CHAPTER ONE

Religious Background of Zen art

2. Statue of Buddha at Yakoshi-ji Temple NARA.

According to ancient chronicles the islands of Japan were created by the gods separate and apart from the rest of the world, with the emperor himself a divine descendant of the sun godess. However, in the western world, there are two distinct images of Japan: a picturesque, romantic old culture of tea houses and samurai, and an economically aggressive, post-industrial nation whose high-tech products appear in every corner of the world.

Both of these views are indeed valid, for Japan is an astonishing fusion of tradition and innovation, of conservative social patterns and sophisticated technology. Despite the trappings of modern Japan, the past is not only alive there, but is a shaping force in Japanese contemporary culture.

As there is so much of Japan's cultural past in its cultural present, it is important to understand where some of the basic aesthetic tenets originate. Perhaps the strongest influence upon Japan's traditional aesthetic values has been that of Buddhism. "Introduced from China in the sixth century, Buddhism joined Shintoism (1) to become one of the two most influential religions in Japan". (Sparke, 1987, p1,1).

Buddhism made its official entrance into Japan in 538 AD. This new religion brought with it a more philosophical approach to life than Shintoism and had a strong link between aesthetics and morality. The Buddhist monks believed that poverty, austerity and simplicity were a means of attaining contemplation and spirituality. Perhaps at this stage it is important to know who Buddha was and how this religion evolved to become one of the most important religions in central-eastern and south-eastern Asia (Fig.2).

(FOOTNOTE)(1) SHINTO, 'The Way of the Gods'. Shintoism existed on a community level and its expressions of simplicity, purity and harmony with nature were its main ideals. Shintoism predated Buddhism and its roots can be traced to the early Japanese agricultural population.

Buddha was a great religious teacher who lived in India five hundred years before the birth of Christ. Born from a high-caste family of Gautama, he was later known by various names, including Siddhartha (the one who has reached the ultimate), Sakyamuni (sage of the Sakyas), or simply Buddha (the enlightened).

The son of a Rajah, or prince, Siddharta Gautama was raised in great luxury. But neither a beautiful wife nor all the riches of his father's court were enough to make him happy. He was deeply troubled by the suffering he saw around him, and wanted to find a way to bring peace to his people's minds.

When he was thirty years old, he left his home, his family and all his possessions to begin his spiritual quest. For six years he lived the life of a hermit, pondering the questions of human mortality and suffering, and devoted himself to meditation for another six years, at the end of which he was close to death from fasting and privation.

Then he remebered that as a boy he often found inner peace by sitting in natural silence and so he proceeded to a wooded area and on sitting under the legendary Bodhi tree he at last found enlightenment and so Gautama had become Buddha.

The original teachings of Buddha were more a philosophy than a religion. Throughout its introduction, Buddhism had struggled through plagues and took some time before acceptance by the throne. There were three fundamental types of Buddhism in Japan: the early scholarly sects, the aristocratic secs and finally, popular, participatory Buddhism which reached down to the common people.

The popular participatory Buddhism which followed the aristocratic sects was home grown and owed little to the Chinese prototypes. Much of it was centred around one particular figure in the Buddhist pantheon, Amida, a Buddhist saint who presided over a western paradise.

The Japanese reformation represented by Amidism was a natural outcome of the contempt for the average man that characterised the early sects. It also opened the door for Zen, which found an appeal among the non-aristocratic warrior class to equal that of the popular Buddhist sects among the peasantry and bourgeoise. As it happened, the warriors who became fired with Zen also took control of the government away from the aristocracy after the twelfth century, with the result that Zen became the unofficial state religion of Japan during its great medieval period of artistic activity.

After the rise of Zen influence among artists, the interest in garden art continued to grow as poets and philosophers increasingly turned to nature for religious and artistic inspiration.

For at least a millenium before the coming of Zen to Japan, gardens had been constructed in China which were based on religious motives, but it was only with the rise of Zen in medieval Japan did gardens become deliberately symbolic of the human search for enlightenment and understanding. Travelling through the countryside of Japan the Zen painters and ink-landscapists would record the essence of nature in their paintings, these in turn were used as design sources for many constructed gardens.

The origins of far eastern landscape gardens have been traced to an obscure Chinese legend which predates Christianity. It records five sacred islands off the coast of Shantang province whose mountain peaks soared thousands of feet into the ocean mist and how they were anchored by a flotilla of giant tortoises to hold them in place.

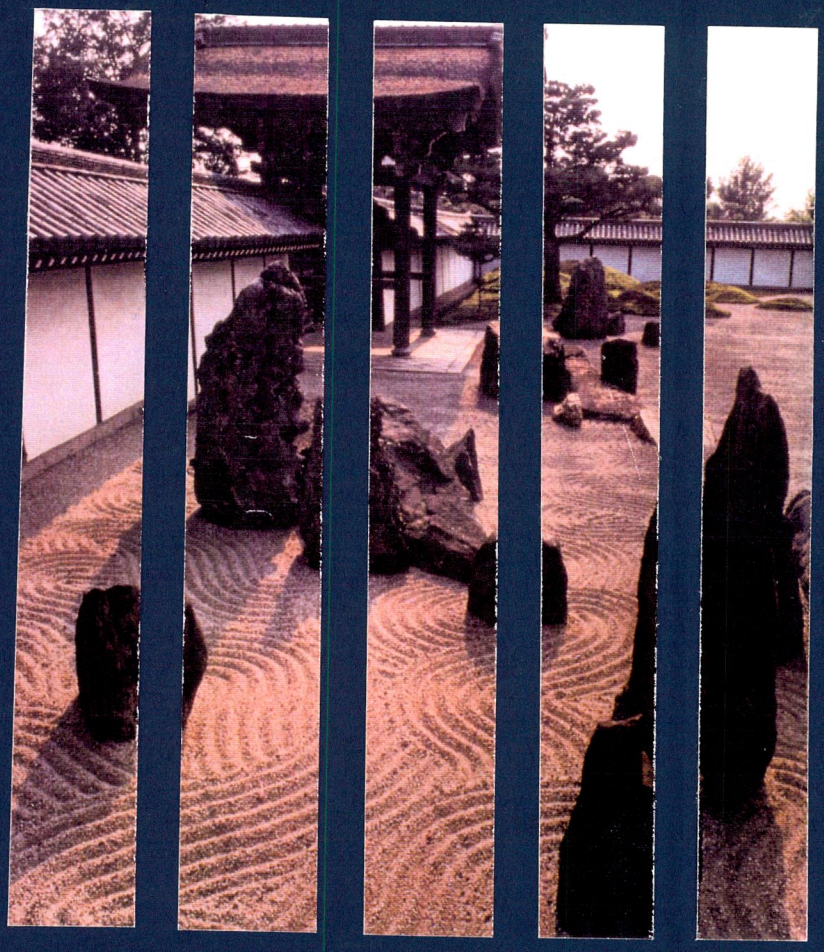
Many of these ancient legends were based on the ancient myths of Japan and were used as source material for the earlier gardens. The Zen gardeners discovered the use of forshortening in their gardens. This took place at almost the same time that the Florentine artist Ucello (1397-1475) began experimenting with natural perspective in his landscape paintings.

The manipulation of perspective and the psychological deception of the Zen garden are always carefully disguised by giving the gardens an appearance of naturalness and age.

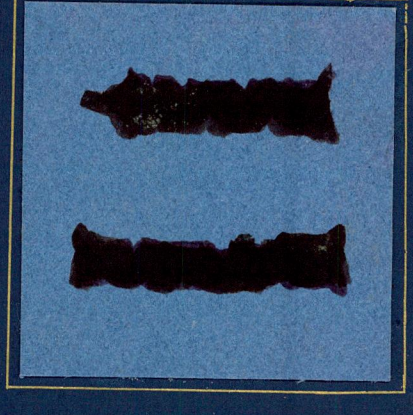
> "The secret of the art of the landscape garden, and of arranging stones in an artificial landscape is to make them appear as if natural forces have placed them in position." (Conder, Josiah)(1964)(p41).

In many of the abstract landscape gardens, such as Ryoan-ji (Fig.3), large rocks are buried in such a manner as to seem like giant icebergs or tall mountains which are joined beneath the quiet surface. This was a special quality of these gardens and is reflected in the Sung landscape paintings where the use of empty space as a form of symbolism, which was later to be found in all of Zen art from rock gardens to the Nōh theatre.

The Sung ink paintings played a very important role and had the greatest influence on Zen landscape gardens. The Sung paintings captured perfectly the feeling Japanese Zen monks had for the natural world, leading them to conclude that gardens should be monochromatic, distilled versions of a large landscape panorama.



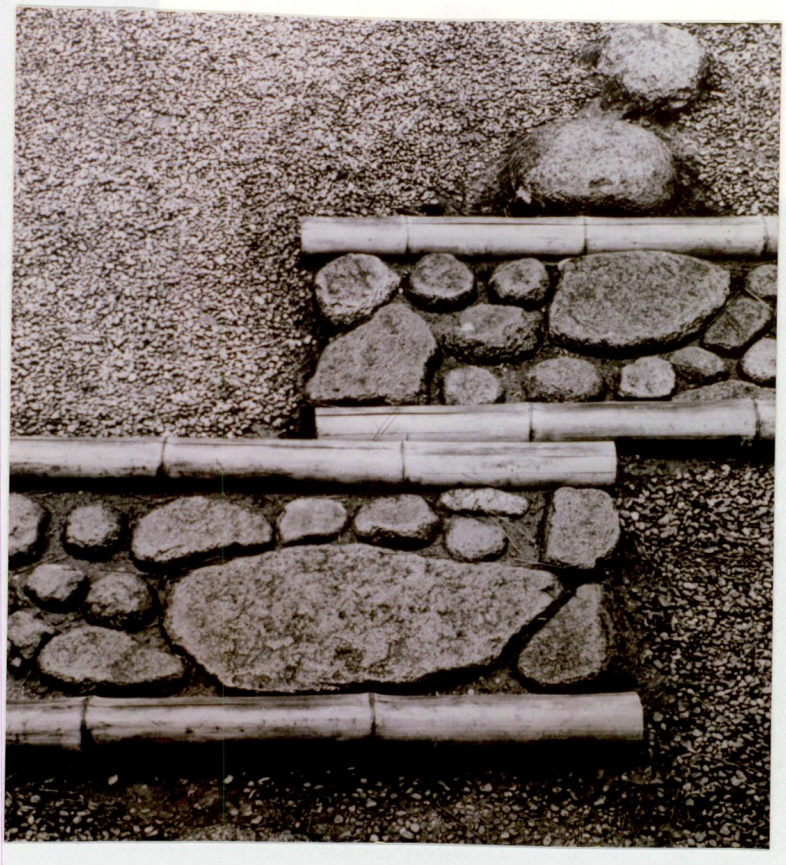
CHAPTER 2



CHAPTER TWO

The Zen Gardens of Japan

3. The Garden at Ryoan-ji in Kyoto.



4. Stone Arrangement at Knockiin Nanzenji-Temple in Kyoto.

Japanese landscape gardens are considered a form of art and are designed in imitation of mountains, ravines, waterfalls, clouds and oceans. Since ancient times, the Japanese have had a preference for man-made gardens which imitated nature. The love of nature upheld by Zen Buddhism surely contributed to this, for a number of Zen monks, including Muso,Soami, had become experts in the art of the landscape garden.

These monks developed a new style of gardening, compressing the vastness of nature into confined spaces and representing nature in a symbolic manner. The earliest type of Japanese garden was based on the ancient methods of arrangement, influenced by the gardens of ancient China (Fig.4). Among these early styles of garden were the 'Shinden-Shiki' or Imperial Audience Hall style, in which the gardens were arranged in front of a detached palace intended for Imperial receptions.

The second historical style belongs to the Kamakura period - that is from the middle of the twelfth to the beginning of the fourteenth centuries. During this time the art of gardening received a great impulse at the hands of Buddhist priests in Kyoto. During this development many elements relating to stone selection and arrangement came into force. Even the direction of the flow of garden streams was set, as a fixed rule, from east to west, the opposite arrangement being considered unlucky.

In this chapter of my study I have chosen to concentrate on the stone garden at Ryoan-ji, and examine it in terms of construction and layout, paying particular attention to the spatial content and the use of symbolism.

The Ryoan-ji at Kyoto was originally the Kitayama villa of the military lord, HosoKawa Katsumuto and was converted into a Zen monastery in the latter part of the fiftheenth century. "This garden is said to be the ultimate in terms of Japanese garden design and is regarded as one of Soami's best masterpieces." (Covello, V.) (Japan)(1984).

5. A Panorama View of Ryoanji.

Soami, who was greatly influenced by Zen philosophy, has made this garden exclusively of stone and white gravel, it is this extreme simplicity that makes it so impressive and, like the Zen principles used, it can only be really understood by those fortunate enough to understand.

Those who visit Ryoan-ji today enter the complete experience, shod in silent shoes they are allowed to continue to the long hojo verandah facing the garden, where they are confronted by the sheer brilliance of the dry landscape (Fig.5).

The spectator enters the garden by his soul observing its perfect balance, harmony and the use of subtle tones adding to the mystery of the fifteen stones within the garden.

This type of Zen landscape garden is called Kare Sansui, which means dry riverbed and was developed by the Zen monks during the medieval era. These new gardens used fine white gravel instead of water.

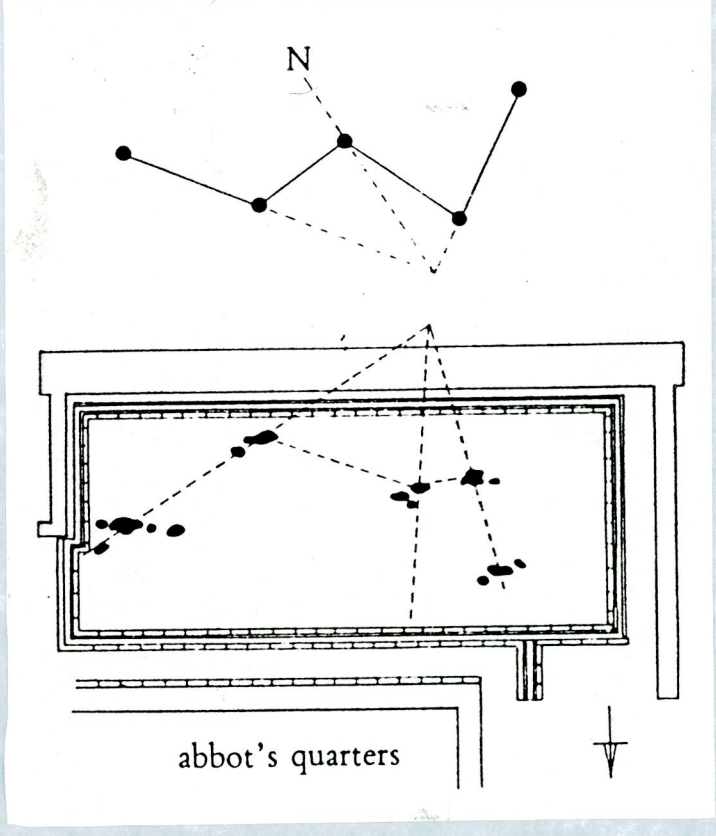
Enclosed within earthen walls, these gardens were usually quite small in scale, many of which were no bigger than a tennis court.

The Ryoan-ji garden consists of fifteen stones arrayed in five distinct clusters. The white sand is carefully raked lengthwise and in a circular motion around the stone clusters. The result is an illusion of ripples in a vast ocean dotted with mysterious islands. The fantastic use of space has never been expressed so purely and symbolically. The fifteen stones are grouped into five sets of two, three or five and arranged in perfect proportion on the level white gravel. Each of the five clusters of stones seems to be balanced around its own centre of gravity.

This garden displays aesthetic stability by the placement of the stones at sufficient depth within their bed of moss which enhances the subtle tones within the garden composition.

6. Ryoanji, A View From the Abbots Quarters.

8. Star Constellation Format for Stone Garden.



The hidden meaning of the rocks in this garden relies on the perception of the individual to interpret its essence.

> "Some who view this dry landscape garden see it as being derived from the ancient legend of '<u>tora-no-ko watashi</u>' in which tigers lead their cubs across a mountain stream" (Tuttle, C.)(Japan)(1984)

while others see resemblances to high mountains and great expanses of ocean. This suggestion of islands dotting a vast sea or mountain peaks rising high above the clouds suggests the inner meanings of a superior culture. For Zen monks and others, the stones were symbols of Zen thought, serving as objects for contemplation and meditation.

According to the teachings of Zen, everything finite tells of the infinite, and everything animate and inanimate is the product of the same force. By meditating on the stone, a Zen monk could understand the essence of the stone, the essence of a mountain, and all else in the universe. To experience this essence to become one with the stone, was to become enlightened.

What was the importance of these stones and why should they have been hauled for hundreds of miles and prized by Shoguns and Zen monks alike?

When they went on their long missions in search of suitable rocks they looked for rocks that resembled the mountains and crags in the Zen ink paintings. This often meant light coloured stones with striated sides and sharp craggy edges.

The rocks used in Ryoan-ji however were more than a symbolic representation of the landscape but were a total distillation of the very universe. "One of the most recent theories states that the rock placement at Ryoan-ji represents the stars of the constellation Cassiopia, as reflected in the ocean." (Fig. 8) (Thacker, C)(London)(1955).

7. Sung Painting Showing Use of Negative Space.

In many ways, this dry landscape garden is hard to appresiate because it is so basic, so essential, because there is no deception or camouflage, as there would be if the garden was covered in vegetation. The power of this garden lies not only in its simplicity but in the elements of naturalness and in particular its nothingness. (Fig. 6)

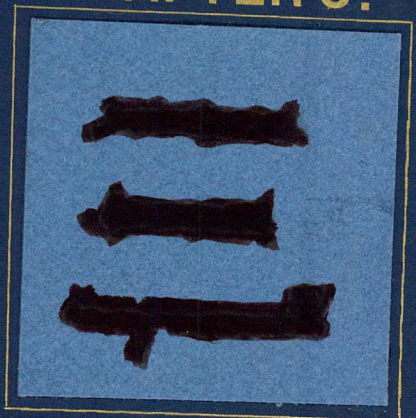
This sheer naturalness appeals directly to the very depths of our being and touches the formless self. The power of suggestion, depends on the willingness of the viewer to admit to a deeper beauty within the stones themselves. Drawing on each individual's unique experience and ability to go beyond literal facts, a single stone can evoke a variety of associations, interpretations and responses.

In pysical terms, the stones are intended to evoke a sense of motion, for they have all been placed upright and at angles to the axis of the garden. This movement is aided and enhanced by the carefully raked ridges of gravel, which carries the viewers eye across the total panarama of the garden.

As in the sung-ink paintings, the use of negative space is very important in terms of the overall composition, (Fig. 7) the empty areas help to emphasise the stones and create the total illusion. The profound suggestiveness of this garden is very well exploited, reducing the composition to its mere essence, just enough to move the spirit.

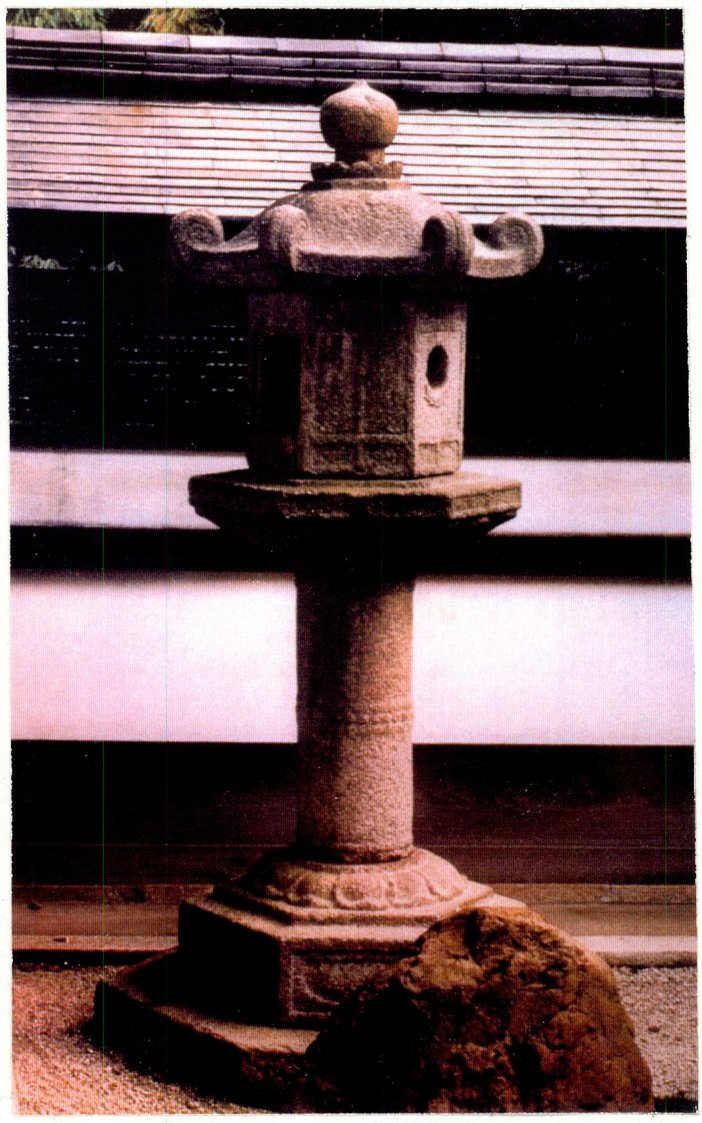
9. Extreme Simplicity at Ryoan-ji.

CHAPTER 3.



CHAPTER THREE

Symbolic Representations



10. Stone Lantern.

Since ancient times the Japanese have shown a remarkable power of creative assimilation. In many branches of the arts they have expressed a genius for inventiveness which speaks for itself.

The principal characteristic of Japanese art is that it leaves so much unsaid. A remote allusion or a slight suggestion is often enough to satisfy the trained Japanese intellect, for it is held in zen philosophy that true beauty can be discovered only by mentally-completing the incomplete.

The quality of aesthetic appreciation owes much to the principles of Zen Buddhism. Such cultural pursuits as painting, the tea ceremony, floral arrangement, and in the art of garden design. The artist will offen represent a whole sky with a mere brush-stroke or a simple gesture. The appreciation of such aesthetic qualities and symbolism is best understood by a knowledge of the myths and legends of ancient Japan and also in the meanings and motifs which inspired Japanese art in the fourth and fifth centuries.

The Japanese have always lived so close to nature that they have developed a profound appreciation for its qualities. The shinto shrines scattered throughout Japan are the sacred domains of Japan's type of natural worship. The stones that marked the boundaries of these sacred places were themselves thought to be immortal, and because of This, they lent a sense of mystery to their forms, which declared the entrance into a closed world. One form was an adaptation of a gate marker to an enclosed village, e.g. (Ise, shrine)

The marker, sometimes took the form of a Tōro or stone (FIG.10) lantern and was used to keep evil spirits away from the villages. Many of these stone lanterns found in shinto shrines; Buddhist temples were used to symbolise life.

11. The Stone Lanterns at Tully, Co.Kildare.

In the western world the grace of god is often represented by light and the advancement of civilisation. Similarly, in the east, light in opposition to darkness has been symbolic of light verses evil. Light shining out of darkness, light brightening dark places, was a sign of victorious gods, and of the ever expanding power of supreme dieties.

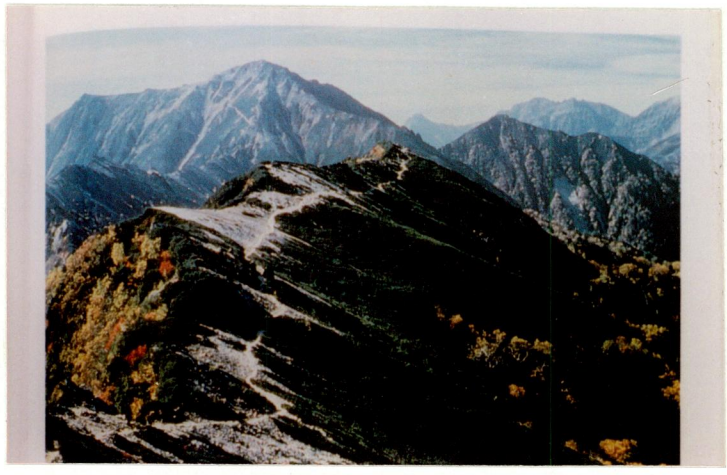
The use of fire within the stone lantern in the Buddist temples, has traditionally conveyed this sense of power - the divine flame proclaimed the might of the gods and symbolically sent forth this strength in the four cardinal directions.

The Tōro was designed with symbolism in mind - its majestic appearance was an attempt to convey the majesty of the gods. Eternal light shining forth from a container made of the eternal substance, stone, (Fig.11) helped to reinforce the sense of otherworldliness.

Gradually the stone lantern came to serve as a source of light in gardens. The garden was originally a place set apart as sacred to the gods. Even today the Japanese-garden is meant to be viewed and not to be touched.

In their search for a means of transcending the world, the Japanese created a garden that was a miniaturisation of nature, a concentration of the elements of nature into a small space. Many such gardens such as Ryoan-ji had stones as their focal point. Occasionally there are combinations of three stones in a representation of the three Buddhas. This was an attempt to infuse stones of odd and unusual shapes with esoteric maeaning.

Legends of Japan often depict holy figures on rocks, and many stones are treasured because some deity is thought to have rested upon them.



12. Distant Mountains of Japan.

13. Miniature Landscapes Made From Stone.

14. The Wedded Rock at Futamigaura, Mie, Japan.

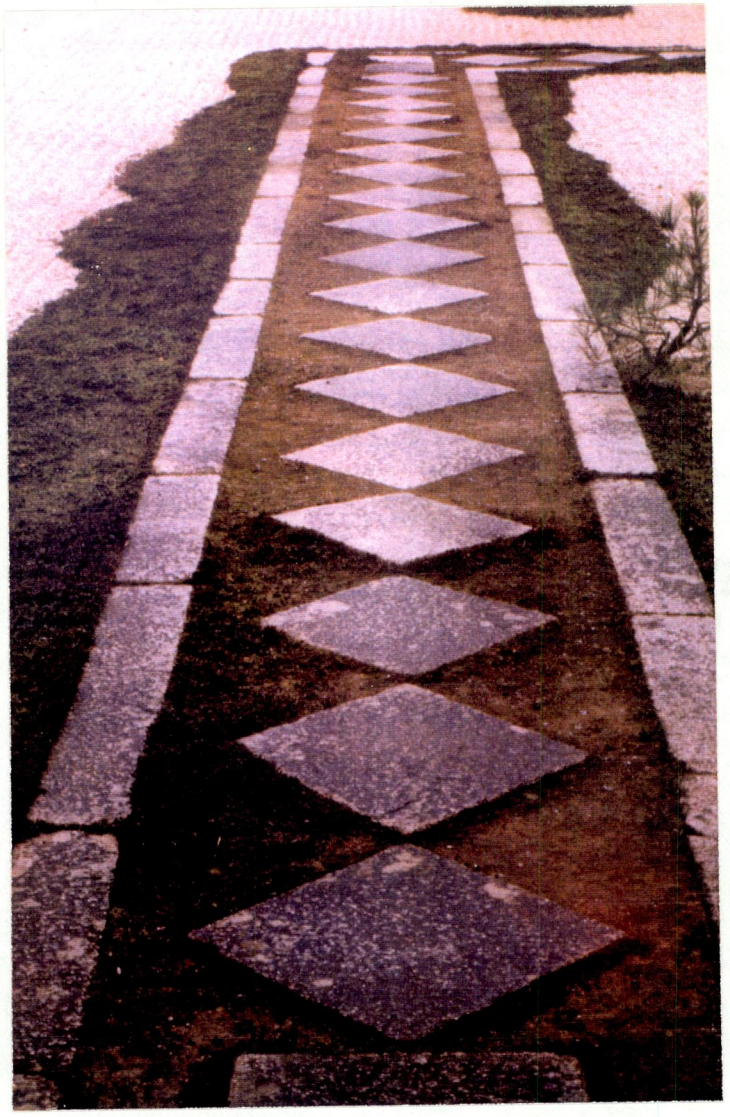
For thousands of years the Japanese have looked upon stones with a spirit approaching veneration, so it is not surprising that the Zen monks began to pay hommage to minature landscapes. During the early periods, around AD. 592-628 minature landscape stones were appreciated both for their natural beauty and for their religious or philosophical symbolism (Fig.12)

For Zen Buddhists, the stone symbolised Mount shomi, a mythical holy moutain that was believed to lie at the centre of the world. For Taoists, the stone symbolised Horai, the Taoist paraidse. For believers in the Chinese philosophical system of Yin-Yang;- the ancient doctrine that attempts to explain nature's workings according to two apposing yet complementary principles - a minature landscape stone set in water symbolised the two fundamental forces of the universe. The stone represented 'male' characteristics: hard, solid, unyielding, dry, hot, bright, strong, forceful, rough and penetrating. -The water symbolised 'female' characteristics: soft, void, yielding, moist, cool, dark, mysterious, weak, passive, and delicate but receptive. (Fig. 13)

The Japanese appreciation of minature landscape stones or suiseki was highly influenced by shintoism, the native religion of Japan. For the shintoist specifically - designated natural stones and other elements in the natural environment - the sun, the moon, and particular spiritual trees - were the abode of powerful spiritual forces or gods.

To symbolise the divine nature of such stones and to mark them off as places of worship, they were entwined by thick ropes of plaited rice-straw fringed with rice stalks and strips of folded white paper.

A striking example of this practice is the pair of rocks in Futamiguara bay. These rocks often referred to as the wedded rocks (Fig.14) - have been associated with Izanagi and Izanami, the male and female mythical creators of Japan.



15. The Use of Stone and Sand at To-Fuku.

In symbolic terms Ryoan-ji seems strikingly modern today and in fact it was only after a critical following for abstract art developed in the west that the Zen kare sansui was "discovered". As recently as the 1930's Ryoan-ji has been ignored, an unkempt sandpile that monks had left in neglect, and it was in 1961 that Daisen-in was restored to what is believed to be its original condition.

In modern terms, and artistic principles, the garden of Ryoan-ji is a good example of abstract expressionism, these gardens are designed to be a symbolic arrangement of mass and space, and so the Zen artists and garden designers actually created a new mode of artistic expression, anticipating the west by several centuries.

If we in the west wish to borrow from the complex world of Zen culture, we must first begin to train and intensify our powers of perception. Perhaps the best case in point is the stone garden at Ryoan-ji, which is a triumph of pure suggestiveness.

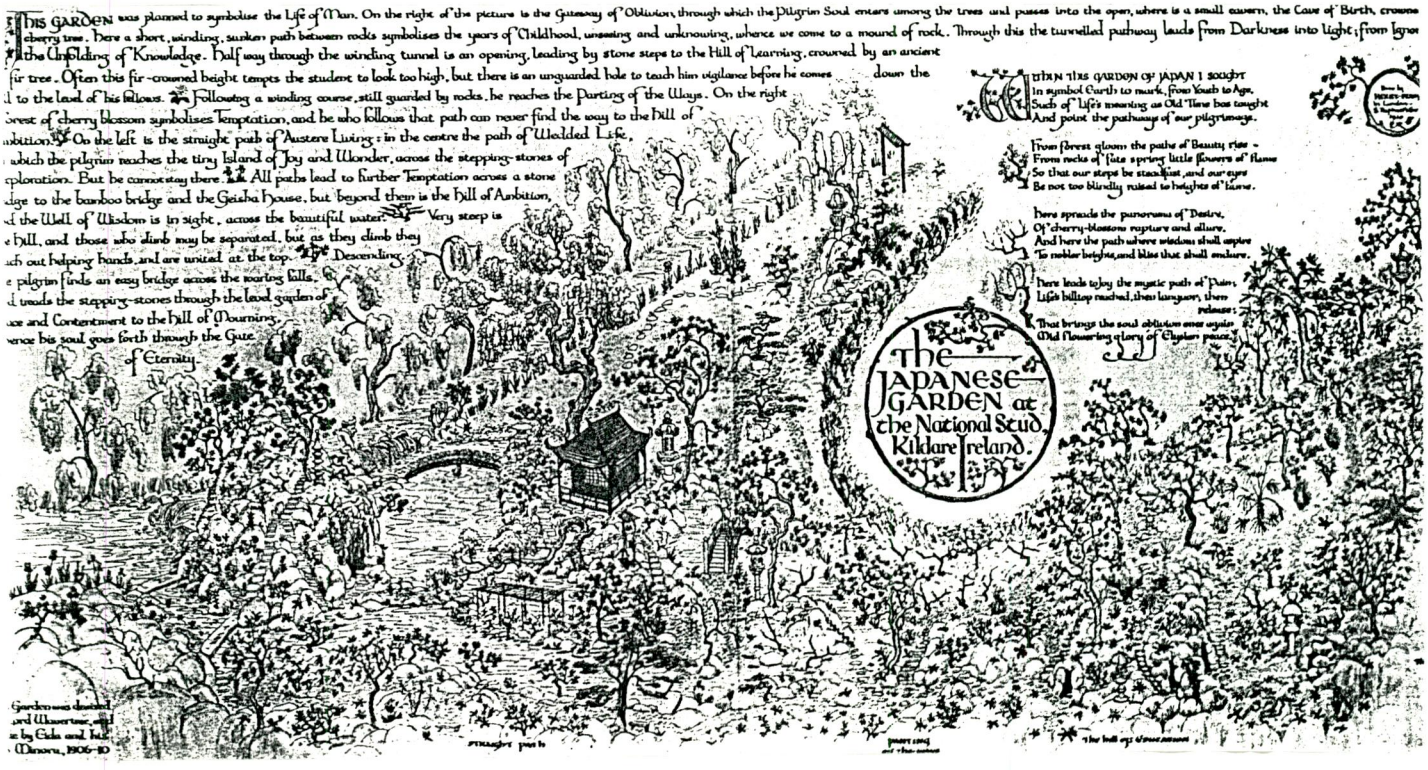
It is clearly a symbol, an invitation to open one's perception and to experience it for what it is, rather than analysing it. If we can take this power of direct perception, sharpened by the devices of Zen art, we may perhaps allow the ancient creators of Zen culture to touch our lives, and open wider the doors of perception.(FIG.15)

CHAPTER 4.

CHAPTER FOUR

Japanese gardens in the west
(A case study: on Tully, Co. Kildare)

16. The Japanese Gardens at Tully.



17. Original Map of Tully by Hall-Walker 1910.

While discussing the use of symbolism in Ryoan-ji and in the gardens of Japan in general, I feel that this is a good opportunity to discuss the twentieth century imported versions in Europe (Fig 16) and in particular the Tully gardens in County Kildare, Ireland.

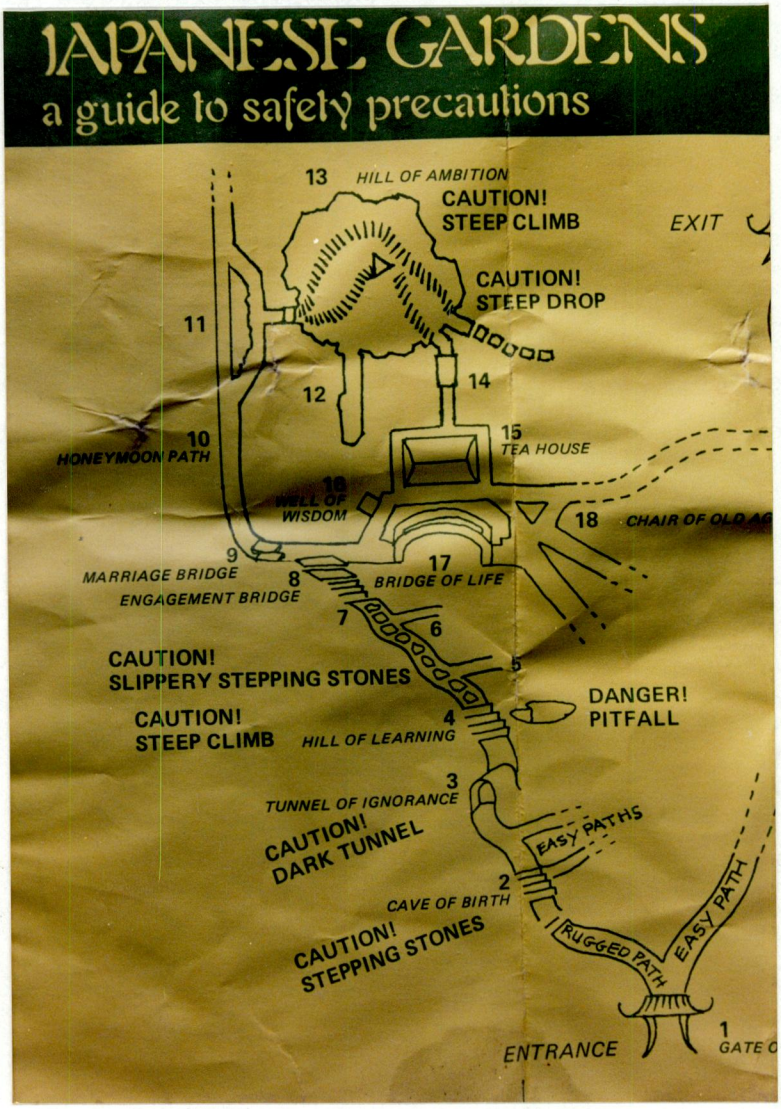
In this study on the Tully gardens I will try and show the importance of stone in its construction and the authority of (FIG.16) its design. The construction of the Tully gardens began in 1906 and was completed in 1910. Devised by Colonel William Hall-Walker the gardens were based upon the original versions at Daisen-in and Ryoan-ji.

Using a similar theme as in Daisen-in the gardens were designed to symbolise the "path of man through life". It (Fig. 18) symbolises the journey of the soul from oblivion to eternity and the human experience of its embodiment as it journeys by paths of its own choice through life.

Typical ambitions towards education, marriage, achievement and old age and eventually to the gateway to eternity are portrayed. The story is quite similar to the pilgrimage of a forlorn Buddhist soul depicted in the famous 16th century symbolic garden of Daisen-in, Kyoto. The garden of Daisen-in is an abstract representation of life in stone and sand, with emphasis on the spiritual experience of the soul rather than its temporal experience.

For a Japanese garden of its period of construction, the gardens at Tully are very authentic, a Japanese garden with a hint of anglicanisation about it. It was precisely the type of garden being made in Japan at that time. It is important to remember that Japan in the 1860's had just opened its doors for trade both ways and that the Japanese were quicker to adapt to western ways than us Europeans were to adapt to eastern ways. (Fig.17)

From a horticultural point of view, the garden at Tully works very well. The Scots Pine would replace the Japanese black pine in the more majestic position in the garden. These pines in Japan were the symbol of long life and happiness. (Fig. 21)

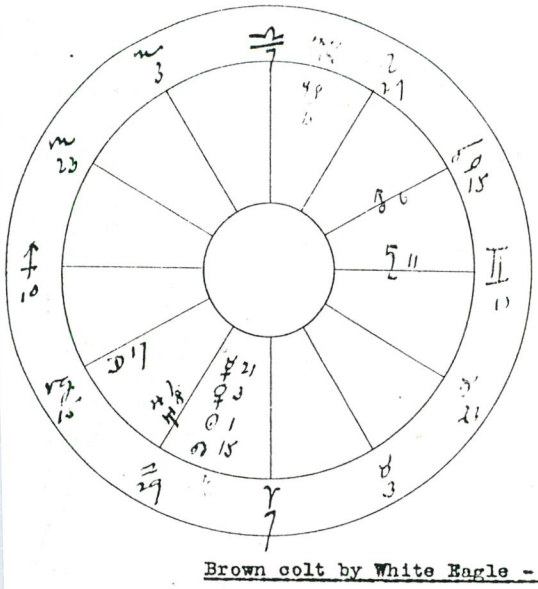


19. Modern Map Guide to the Tully Gardens.

18. The Garden of the Daisen, Kyoto (Muromachi period).

20. View of Tully Garden showing Tea House.

25. The Tea House at Tully.



ALL WHITE

Brown colt by White Eagle - Colonia

This colt, if astrology goes for anything at all, ought to be a money maker, and a money maker to you. Your Moon is on his ascendent, sextile his Jupiter and Herschel in the 2nd (which if your 3rd). His M.C. is sextile your Moon - his Moon is in your 2nd House (that of money) trine your M.C. Saturn in his 7th is opposition your Moon certainly, but I dont think this alone is enough to counteract all the others. His Sun and Venus, also in your 3rd House, are sextile your Sun (but square Moon). If you lose through this colt it will be by selling him and letting him go out of your hands as you did Prince Palatine.

Health

On my visits to the garden, I was able to find out more about Colonel William Hall-Walker. I learned that he had a great interest in astrology as a science and in the breeding of (Fig 22) racehorses. On his visits to Kyoto, Colonel Hall-Walker, later known as Lord Wavertree, had collected many stone lanterns and garden elements which were shipped back to Ireland on a specially chartered ships. Obviously he was so impressed by the original gardens at Ryoan-ji that he was determined to create his own authentic Japanese garden.

In an interview with the present day Manageress (Catherine Choiseul) I learned that Lord Wavertree had devised individual horiscopes for his newly born racehorses and that by consulting these he was able to determine the success or the physical health of his colts. Apparently his astrological studies were quite (Fig. 22) successful and he had many great horses.

In more recent times the gardens were constructed and preserved by Mr John Coleran who, when I interviewed him, referred to the similarities between the Tully gardens and the Japanese garden at Daisen-in. The '<u>Kara-Sansui</u>' or dry landscape garden at Tully was constructed by Mr John Coleran in 1974.

> "This garden depicts the conflict within our human nature, the conflict of the two elements, body and soul within the individual, a conflict which is resolved only in a transformed life, in the becoming one with God in the hereafter. This is represented in the transformation from rock form to tree form." (Coleran, John)(Journal, 1978).

The fact that there is a tea room in the main garden at Tully allows us to explore the world of the tea garden and indeed the tea ceremony as an expression of Zen. The tea room at Tully was imported from Japan and is used for tea ceremonies on certain occasions and during Japanese festivals.

23. The Dry Landscape Style Garden at Tully.

24. Contemplative Garden at Tully.

The tea ceremony has a long tradition in Japan, introduced during the Kamakura period (1185-1336). The powdered greentea was originally used as a stimulant, used mainly to prevent the monks from falling asleep during long periods of meditation. The early method of tea drinking took the form of what came to be known as "tea gatherings" or Cha Yoriai.

These gatherings consisted of tea contests in which the participants vied with each other to identify the places of origin of the different kinds of tea. The tea houses of the time were usually surrounded by a garden, as is the case with the Tully tea house. The tea ceremony also was a time to become one with the self and the ceremony was intended to engage all the senses, soothing each in turn (Fig. 27).

As described by Suzuki, the organs of sight, hearing and smell are all embraced even before the ceremony begins. The main purpose of this is to create a feeling of complete harmony and tranquility conducive to the reverential spirit of the Zen sacrament.

The tea ceremony is the great parable of Zen culture, which teaches by example that the material world is a thief depriving us of our most valuable possessions - naturalness, simplicity, and self-knowledge. (Fig 20)

Chanoyu (the Japanese tea ceremony, literally "hot water for tea") involves a communion between a hold and his guests. Begun with the adoption of Chinese customs of tea drinking and refined with elements of Zen philosophy and practice, Chanoyu has taken on diverse symbols and rituals. It is also simply an entertainment in which guests are invited to drink tea in a specially prepared area using particularly selected rituals.

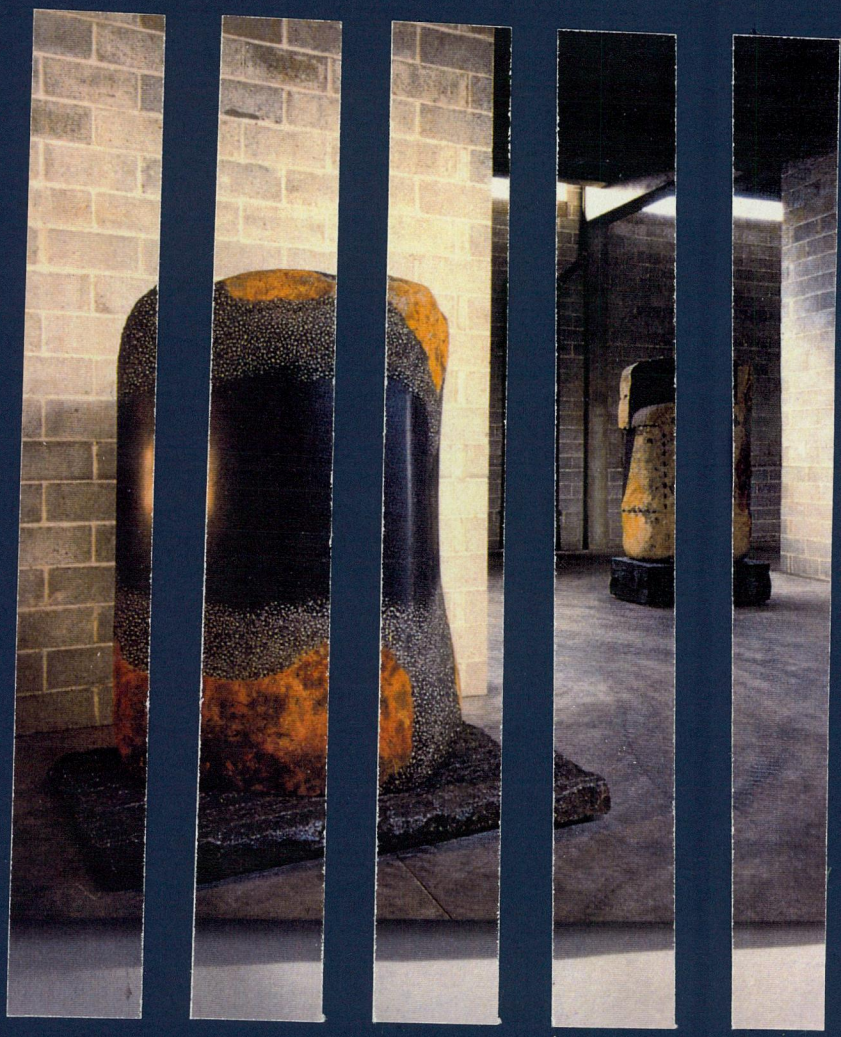
In Japan, the first mention of tea drinking was in the eigth century Nara period (710-794) at the court of Emperor Shomu. The practice of cultivating tea in Japan in that century was limited to the grounds of a few Buddhist temples.

27. The Tea Ceremony.

The cultivation of tea in Japan dates to the ninth century when the first tea seeds were imported from China during the Tang dynasty, a period when cultural exchange between these two countries was flourishing. At this time the tea drinking ceremony was not only a popular pastime but was also recognised for its medicinal benefits.

The spirit of etiquette of tea became highly infused with the principles of Zen, under whose influence the tea- ceremony became greatly refined and was named "Waki", which referred to things at their simplest, most austere and natural state. The tea ceremony of today has become essentially a social function. The guests meet and after a single bow they proceed in single file to rinse their hands and mouths at a stone basin in the garden (Fig. 26) and then enter the tea room and the tea ceremony commences.

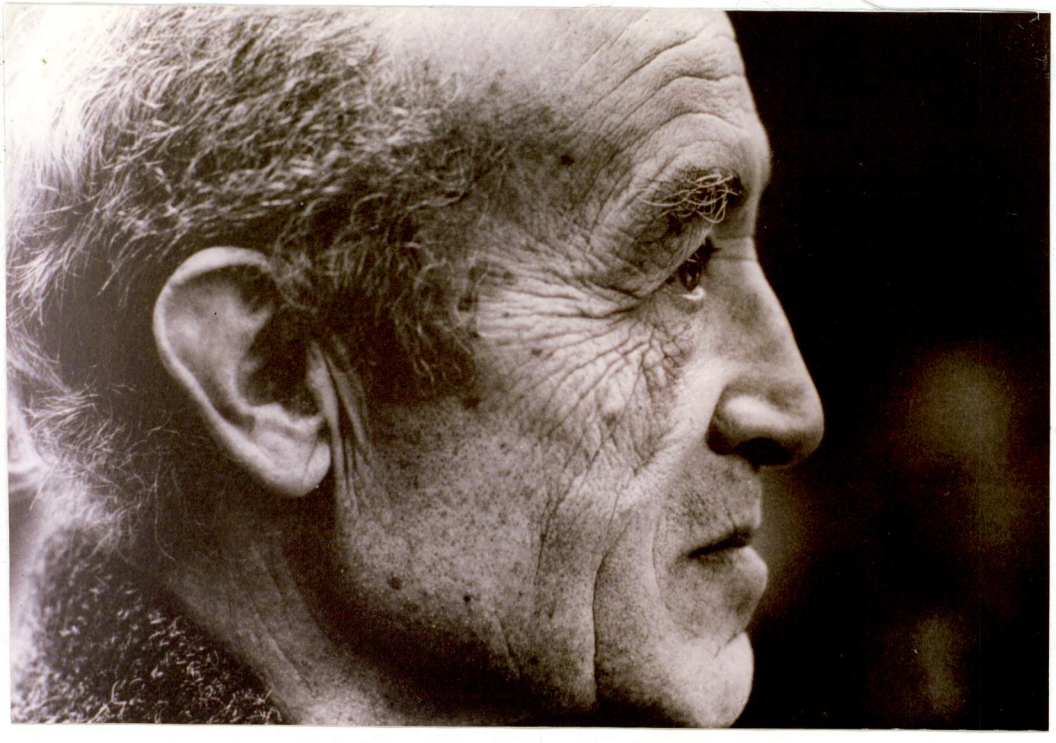
26. Views from Inside Tea Houses at Tully.



CHAPTER 5.

CHAPTER FIVE

The stone sculpture of Isamu Noguchi



28. Isamu Noguchi Stone Sculptor.

29. The Zen Garden at Ryoanji.

In this concluding chapter I intend to give an appreciation of the work of a modern Japanese stone sculptor and show how he used the philosophies of Zen in his work.

For my analysis I have chosen to include the work of Isamu Noguchi, an American Sculptor and designer noted for his environmental concept of sculpture. Although born in Los Angeles in 1904, Isamu Noguchi spent his early years travelling back and forth between America and Japan, and so from a very early age he became influenced by the traditions of the Orient.

Noguchi's early years in America were spent under the guidance of Onorio Ruotudo, who was a Director at the Leonardo school of art, where Noguchi had enrolled as a sculptor. His first work was Oscar Wilde's "Salome" and this won him instant recognition as a portrait sculptor, which was to later sustain him in the bitter Depression years.

In 1926, Noguchi was confronted by an exhibition of Constantine Brancusi's work which was held at the Brunner Gallery. This was to become an influential turning point for him. It was with Brancusi that Noguchi trained and learned how to take the quitessence of nature and distill it.

In a quest to find his true identity, Noguchi set out for Japan in 1930, and there he spent five months studying in a pottery centre near Kyoto. It was here that Noguchi was introduced to ceramics and while in Japan he worked on his terracottas which were later exhibited in New York.

While in Kyoto, Noguchi came into direct contact with the Japanese and took time to tour the Japanese countryside and to study the beauty of Japanese gardens. (Fig.29)

This whole experience could be seen as an extended search for his identity beyond his parents to more primitive sources, and he now tried to reach a mystical communion with nature, in an effort to overcome his profound rootlessness.

31. Stage Designs for Martha Graham.

On his stay in Japan, Noguchi came to the conclusion that apart from prehistoric pottery and the Zen gardens, there really was no sculptural tradition in Japan worthy of his interest. The iconic tradition of temple statuary did not interest him, in terms of his own grasp for sculptural space.

Gardens on the other hand not only recalled him to the native roots of all people, but offered an expressive form that he later called "sculptural totality". (Hunter, Sam)(Noguchi)(p65).

For Noguchi the Zen garden composed itself into a total entity which became something greater than actual physical space.

This principle later influenced Noguchi in his designing of dance sets for Martha Graham. In his stage designs the space illusion based on his studies of Ryoan-ji showed him how to create an imaginary space that could expand beyond its own physical limits. Noguchi felt that his designs were a fulfilment of his dreams of integrating the arts of breaking down the barriers between the public and a dream space. (Fig. 31)

When Noguchi was young he was introduced to greek legends by his mother and so he became intrigued by mythological and historic forms. His sense of fantasy was further nourished by his encounter with Japanese folk tales.

Noguchi's understanding of mythology as a manifestation of collective unconscious found vivid expression in his stage design for Martha Graham's dance dramas. Noguchi adopted a distinct style, whereby his stage structures generated a timeless atmosphere, eluding interpretation, changing their identities as the dancers interacted with them, rocks became mountains and trees were transformed into temple columns.

39. Noguchi Mountain Sculpture.

33. The UNESCO Gardens in Paris.

By imaginatively restructuring the (Fig.31) dance stage through the invention of sculptural form, he allowed the spectator to enter the complete experience. This is much the same principle that he used in his public commissions and parks.

In 1952 Noguchi began to study under VeKiya, the professional Japanese gardener. Here Noguchi discovered the essential principles of rock selection and composition. He learned how to transform traditional Japanese symbols for nature into his own expressive terms. Stones, he found, had "dead" or "live" sides and must be composed according to the rules of Shin Gye and therefore identify the formal or informal character of their arrangements.

Among Noguchi's most ambitious landscape projects of the fifties was his UNESCO garden in Paris which was completed in 1958 (Fig.35). This garden was Noguchi's first international success, bringing him instant recognition among the artists at that period.

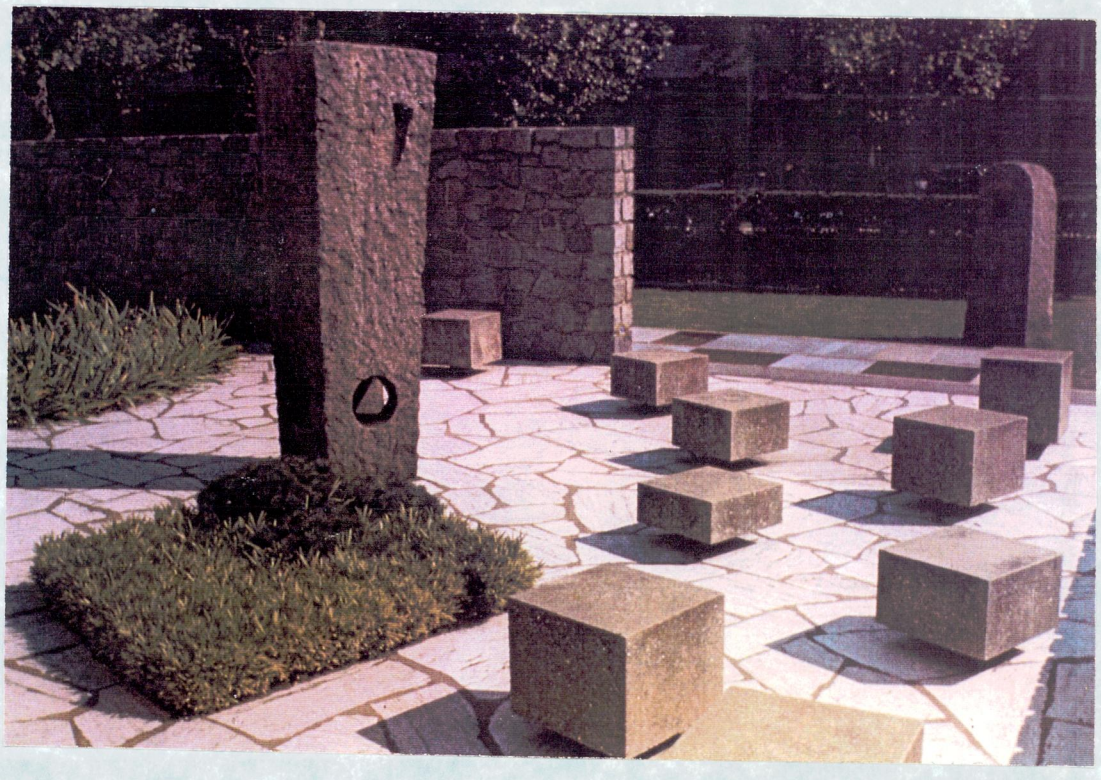
The gardens at UNESCO meant frequent visits from Paris to Japan, where he set out like a Zen monk on his quest for the perfect rocks in the mountains of Japan. Collecting these rocks with the assistance of the master gardener and designer, Shigemori Mirei.

The final results of this garden was a beautiful synthesis of the Zen garden tradition and his own abstract (Fig.30) formalism influenced by mainstream modern art. He created interesting oppositions of the natural and the artifical by placing cement blocks among his large found rocks.

In Japan, among the Zen Buddhist garden masters who influenced Noguchi, such as Muso Kokuski and Soami, the garden exists on the same aesthetic level as painting or sculptures.

32. The Stone Within.

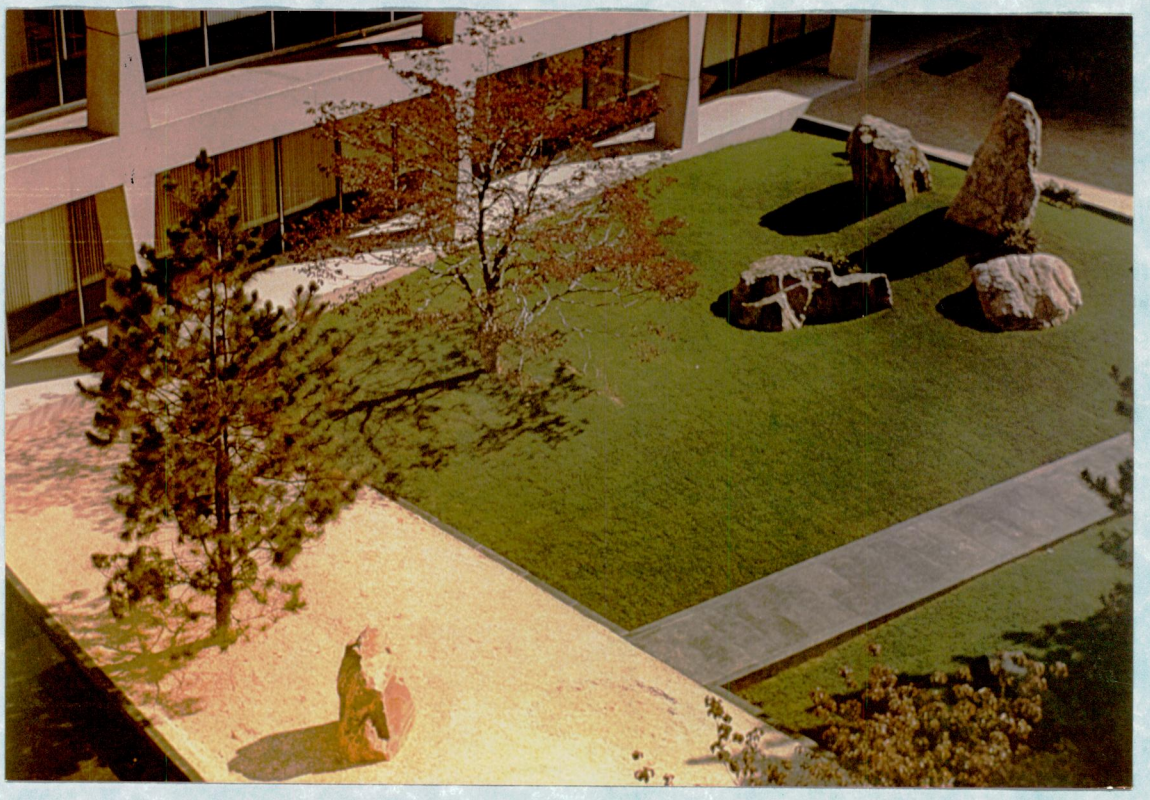
30. Noguchi Garden Sculpture 1980's.



34. Detail (1) From UNESCO Gardens.

35. Detail (2) from UNESCO Gardens.

36. Gardens for Headquarters of IBM, New York.



37. Chase Manhattan Bank Plaza Garden.

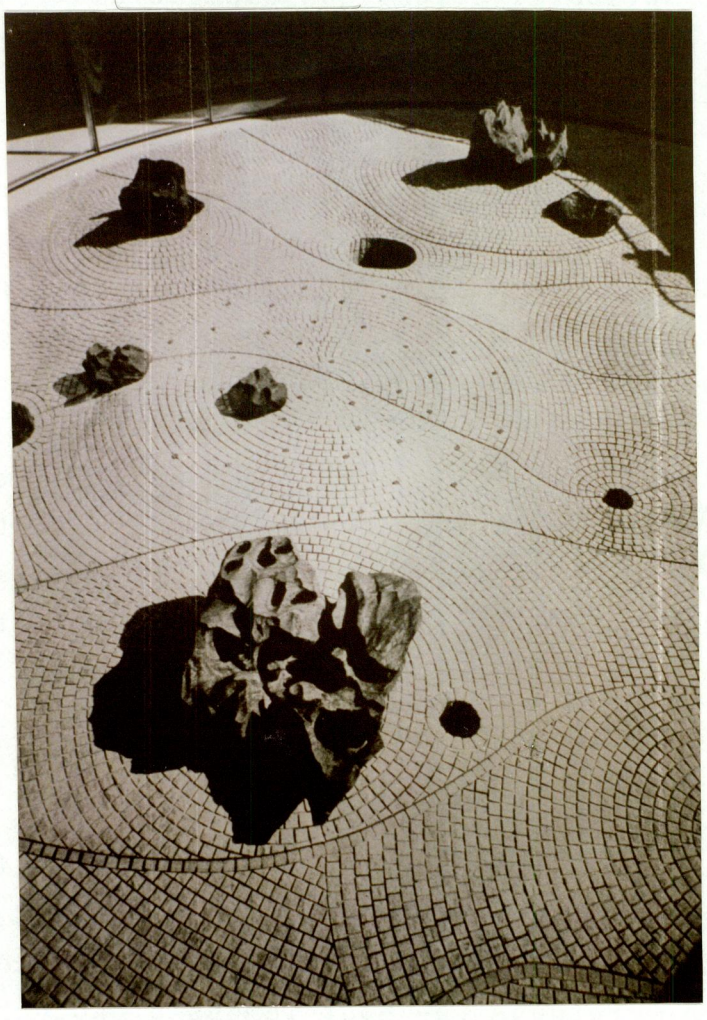
> "The Zen gardens of Japan are considered to be an artform, valued for its own sake. It is a background for cultivated and philosophical intercourse, and is designed as an escape from the worlds illusions and distraction. It is intended to lead one to discover ones true inner voice. (Noguchi) (Japan) (1978)

Noguchi even went on to state that the garden at UNESCO, in Paris, was his own Ryoan-ji, referring to the classic esthetic Zen garden in Kyoto, where just a few austere stones and a wide expanse of raked gravel, evoke the sea and island mountain that symbolise the sacred abodes of the Gods.

Noguchis garden was his own personal effort to find a way of linking the ritual of stone, of ancient times to our modern needs. The Japanese worship of stone was really an appreciation of nature, and most of Isamu Noguchi's work was of stone, cut or roughly hewn to reveal the inner spirit of the material.

In Noguchi's 'mountain piece, he reveals the concealed innerspace, in a search to find the stone within. (Fig 36). There is a strong relationship between Noguchi's formless stone masses and Zen's philosophy of excepting Nature's forms, even in their roughest aspect, with a minimun of aesthetic transformation. Perhaps the most famous of Noguchi's work in terms of Zen expression is the Chase Manhatten Bank Plaza garden (Fig. 37) In this plaza the rocks are natural found objects, and their placement and situation represent the borrowed scenery aspect of the Japanese Zen garden tradition, at Kyoto.

The patterned pavement substitutes for the raked gravel convention of the Zen garden at Ryoan-ji. Whether viewed at ground level, through a circular glass window from the interior corridor, or from the open plaza above, the garden functions as an effective oasis for contemplation in the busy life in the heavily populated workspace within the Bank. (Fig 38).



38. Chase Manhattan Bank Plaza, Dry Aspect.

Noguchi's aim was to use the rocks in a non-traditional way. Instead of being part of the earth's surface, they burst up-wards through the ground and seem to levitate out of the sur-face. At this stage Noguchi had invoked a personal system of symbolism, in the spirit of Zen.

Throughout his career, Noguchi's sculpture became more and more concentrated on pure stone, especially the very hard granites and basalts which were mainly found in Japan. Noguchis admiration for the ancient gardens of Japan went beyond geometry into the metaphsics of nature, having man either as the spectator or as the participant.

In the 1968 edition of "A Sculptor's World" Noguchi states that in Japan the rocks in a garden are so arranged as to demonstrate the primordial mass below. The rocks almost gain the weight of the whole world anchored by their deep roots. This weight concept is a very strong link between his chase plaza and the Ryoan-ji garden.

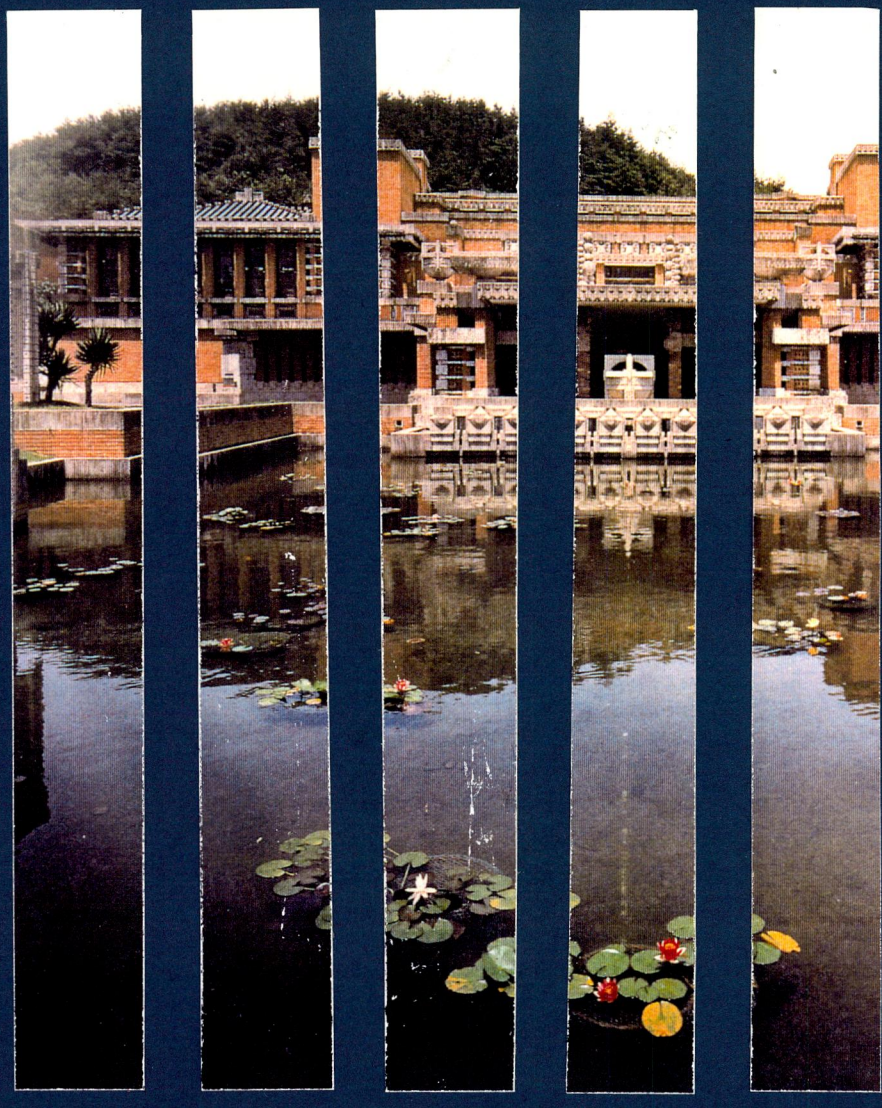
The Zen gardens were an everlasting source of spatial and aesthetic ideas for Noguchi. In the garden of Ryoan-ji, the Kare Sansuior dry riverbed concept is reflected in Noguchi's "Alter of Heaven" (1950) in Peking. However, for Noguchi the garden itself was a sculpture. It's not just how the stones are used, but how the whole thing is used. In that sense, it is not a particular object that inerested him but the general relationships. The relatioship of objects in totality and to life and to people.

In 1935 Noguchi entered the aesthetic world of the theatre; however he still thought of his work a sculpture. His designs for theatre sets were intended to create atmosphere and space. This led Noguchi to the task of the Japanese theatre tradition and in particular the abstract ritualistic form of Nōh drama where time and action are distilled. For this he studied once again the randomness of the Japanese garden with its minimalistic forms, e.g. rocks on raked gravel. His taste had always been for the symbolic rather than the descriptive or the picturesque.

In his portrait sculptures Noguchi again was obsessed with space illusion, his portraits always treated his subjects' faces as landscapes, whose unique contours had to be made into art without the imposition of any perceived ideas.

Noguchi has succeeded in taking the ancient traditions of the orient into a modern context. His UNESCO gardens, which reflect western ideas, his Chase Manhatton Bank plaza which brings a contemplative situation contrasting with the urban frenzy and finally his special concepts and the drama of his theatre set designs.

All of this reflects his true appreciation for the traditional arts of Japan and show how he has succeeded in using the basic material of stone as an expression of Zen in a modern age.



CHAPTER 6.

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CHAPTER SIX

Modern stepping stones

The Japanese have for thousands of years been in possession of a high level of skill in stone masonry. The ancient Japanese constructed gigantic "mound" tombs that had base areas much larger than those of the pyramids in Egypt. Great stone slabs were used to make the chambers wherein the bodies of dead emperors were laid to rest in sarcophaguses.

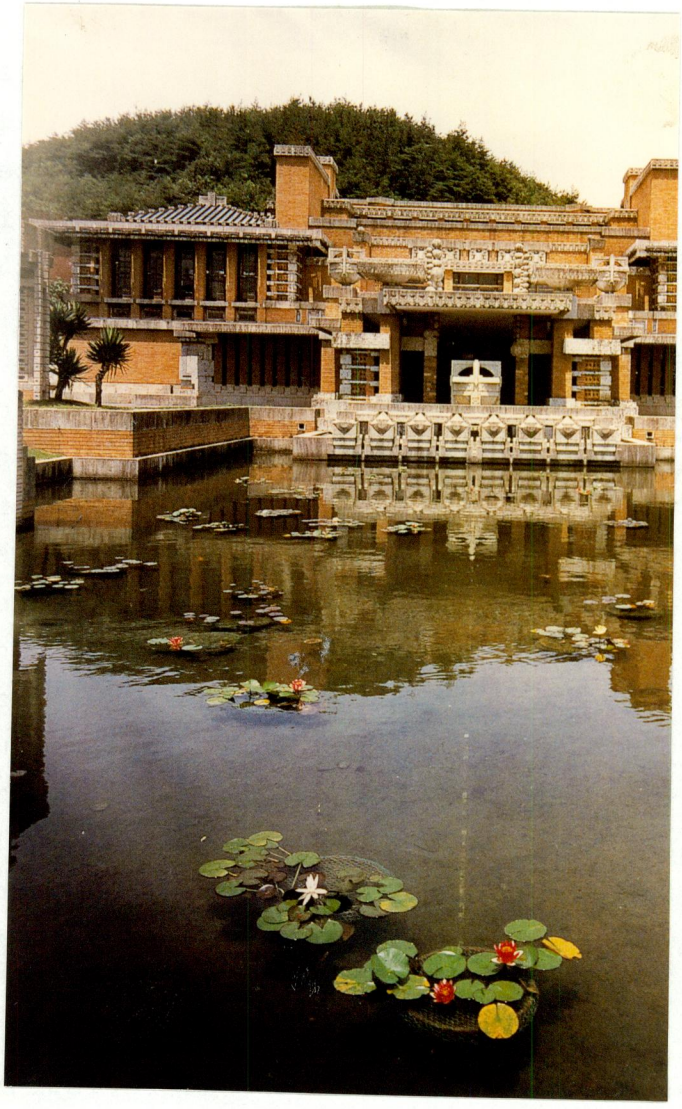
During the late medieval period, the Japanese built lofty castles on solid rock as great fortresses and used stone in their sculptural gardens. However it was not until after the introduction of Western architecture in the mid-nineteenth century that the Japanese began to use this material in the construction of public buildings and residences.

Up until this, the traditional architecture of Japan was constructed entirely of wood. However Japan began to investigate other styles during the nineteenth century and this resulted in the adoption of the western style "wall". Perhaps one of the reasons why Japan chose to use wood as a construction material instead of stone was due to the need to be able to rebuild quickly after destruction by fire or earthquakes, which occurred frequently.

Japan's architectural history goes back for thousands of years and many of the newly found principles of Zen philosophy were adopted by architects, compactness, simplicity and austerity and the blending of architecture with its natural surroundings, reflected the same values as in the dry landscape gardens at Kyoto.

Down through history, Japan has had to improvise in order to progress. In the field of architecture, Japan has had a distinct impact on the rest of the world.

Modern Japan opened its doors to trade with the USA and Europe in the 1850's. This was a major step forward for a nation that had experienced total isolation for more than 250 years. This was when modern Japan took the first steps towards becoming a highly sophisticated industrial nation.



40. Frank Lloyd Wright's Imperial Palace.

The impact of Japanese architecture on European styles was largely the result of its exhibiting at large exhibitions like Paris in 1867 and Vienna in 1873. By this time the Japanese style had become one of the main sources of the french architectural and decorative art nouveau movement.

Japan provided an important example for the emergence of a new decorative style. Europe in desperation and as a need to escape the industrial revolution sought refuge in the freshness OF —, Japanese style in the form of architecture was seen at many great exhibitions including the 1894 exposition at San Francisco. The Brooklyn Botannical garden installed elements of Japanese temple gardens and included a reconstruction of the famous Kyoto rock garden of Ryoan-ji.

These Japanese exhibitions had a dramatic influence on the progress of modern American architecture and design. Perhaps the most prominent architect who used these aesthetic principles of Zen, was the American, Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright became one of the most powerful influences in modern architecture and was responsible for the setting up of "modern movements in France and Holland in the years following World War II. (Fig. 40)

In depending so strongly upon Japan as a source of inspiration, Wright developed a number of Zen inspired principles governing the layout and styles of architecture.

Modernisation and westernisation had affected Japan on a massive scale, following the depression of war time. Japan found it necessary to gather its strength and take up where it had left off. By then it had learned a lot from the west, but had given away a lot in return, and so as only Japan knows how, it began to rebuild itself.

Since then Japan has provided in the areas of architecture, crafts and in art & design and aesthetic appreciation a model for the rest of the world to follow.

CONCLUSION

From the dawn of time, the Japanese have demonstrated an amazing ability in the assimilation and refinement of artistic expression. The age of Zen, with its austere simplicity led to a new wave of energy which was to expand beyond the limits of the orient and influence the western world.

The Meiji Restoration of 1868 set the stage for Japanese modernisation whereby a variety of new forces which had been gathering mormentum under the old system, became liberated.

During this period, Japan ended its isolation and fuedal existance, and emerged to make its way into the international world as a modern nation.

In terms of cultural history this was the time when Japan began to absorb the modern cultures of Europe and America, and was to have a profound affect on modern Japanese arts.

Contemporary Japan gives the impression of being a conglomeration of several imported cultures, the work of stone sculptor, Isamu Noguchi is an example of this mixture and blending of Japanese and western traditions. This resulted in his use of stone as a symbolic material which represented his eternal quest for his life identity.

Even in the world of Architecture, the influence of architect Frank Lloyd wrihgt was to have a lasting effect on modern Japanese traditions.

This alienation within a culture is also reflected in the pressence of a Japanese garden in Ireland. In my study I have included an appreciation of the Gardens at Tully, Co. Kildare. However, are these gardens really understood? or are they like the contemplative rock gardens at Ryoan-ji, so natural yet so extreme that they decieve our western intellects?.

In order to try and understand the Japanese aethetic tradition, it helps when we look at the everyday life of the Japanese.

The aesthetic approach to work is also a strong tradition linking ancient Japan with the new world of oriental technocrats, work aesthetics are based on the zen-like ideal of cultivated intuition, honed by endless repetition.

This ideal is most romantically expressed in the example of Zen archery. 'To master the way of archery, one has to become one with one's bow'. (Hoover) (Japan) (Chapter 5). The arrow thus shot would automatically strike the target, - this means that the rambling mind, Fails to achieve total concentration, and in order to acquire the ideal state of awareness one must first empty the mind, cancel all superflows thoughts and only then will you find your true goal.

The Japanese have always had a very unique way of viewing things. The emphasis in focussing on the inner unit initially and then the outer shell has created a very particular way of understanding form, which operates by moving from the inside to the outside.

This became a new way of seeing things, the westerner tended to look on the outer form first rahter than its detail. Inevitably this fundamental difference in perception has caused misunderstandings between east and west, and creates difficulty for westerners to contemplate Japanese design as the Japanese perceive it.

By questioning our perception of the visible form, we ask many questions. Do we really understand the hidden meanings within the Zen gardens of Japan? To what extent does the gardens in Kildare help our understanding of Japanese culture?, and what mystical quality in stone makes it such a suitable material for symbolism in the teachings of Zen culture?

In this conclusion, I do not intend to answer all such questions, but merely highlight their importance, whereupon through our experiencing of the stone garden at Ryoan-ji, we discover our own conclusions, in our ability to perceive.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The History of Art staff at National College of Art and Design, and in particular Dr Nikki Gordon Bowe who guided me along the right path and the staff of the NCAD Library who supplied most of the source material for the preparation and completion of this study.

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