

枯山水庭園の新様式に関する研究

A Study of a New Type of Karesansui Garden

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Abstract : For centuries the *karesansui* garden had mainly been a symbolic representation of the natural landscape. Then the Kyoto artist and scholar Shigemori Mirei (1896-1975) set out to explore ways to transform this traditional Japanese Garden type. His background as a painter allowed him to see several new ways to do so. Shigemori introduced lines, shapes and colors to the *karesansui* garden. Also he departed from the usual reference to a historical or natural landscape and based some of his new gardens on a story or the images a place's name evokes. The result is a new type of *karesansui* garden.

Keywords: *karesansui*, Shigemori Mirei, Japanese garden

キーワード : 枯山水, 重森三玲, 日本庭園

1. Introduction

In international comparison Japan has a large amount of outstanding contemporary architecture. On the other hand, when we look at what surrounds these structures, we still see many remnants of the past. It is almost as if many of these outdoor spaces were designed in Edo period or earlier. Much innovation has taken place in architecture, but the contemporary outdoor spaces seemed to have been left behind. This fact impressed me a lot and reminded in my mind until a few years I came across the work of Shigemori Mirei. I started to realize that this was the work of somebody who was trying to transform the Japanese garden and create a new type. I decided to look more closely at his body of work.

Defining *karesansui*: The following is a useful definition from the 'Bilingual dictionary of Japanese Garden Terms'¹⁾ to better understand this paper's keyword *karesansui*: "dry landscape (garden); dry garden. A garden style unique to Japan, which appeared in the Muromachi period. Using neither ponds nor streams, it makes symbolic representations of natural landscapes using stone arrangements, white sand, moss and pruned trees. In *Sakuteiki* of the Heian period, the term indicated a stone arrangement in a part of the garden without water."

Objective of this paper: This paper shows how Shigemori went about transforming this specific Japanese garden type called *karesansui*, illustrated by photos of relevant garden examples supported by a quantitative analysis.

2. Point of this study

Shigemori Mirei developed a new type of *karesansui* garden. He departed from the usual reference to a historical landscape (or a painting of such) and used 'new points of departure' for his designs. To express those he introduced graphic elements to the *karesansui* style garden. Those are lines, planes of colors or shapes and font. The result was a new and often avant-

garde looking type of *karesansui* garden.

3. Preexisting study

Here I would like to mention the article 'The late Shigemori Mirei' by Nishizawa Fumitaka and Kurita Isamu (1980), 'The Basis of the Formative Artist Shigemori Mirei', by Tanaka Hisao (1976) and the two more recent articles 'In Pursuit of the beauty of the Karesansui Garden' by Ôkita Hiroataka (2001) and 'Shigemori Mirei's Garden Studies and Creations' by Tatsui Takenosuke (2002).

The one closest in content to this paper is Tanaka Hisao's work from 1976²⁾. As a Professor in Art History though he largely focuses on Shigemori's paintings as well as his personal history and development. He only describes the gardens in a general way, and does not consider the specific steps Shigemori took to transform the *karesansui* garden in any detail.

All of the above mentioned papers are valuable contributions to the study of Shigemori's work, but nobody seems to have looked at how he actually transformed the symbolism and as a consequence thereof the shape of the *karesansui* garden. This study is original in the way that it looks at the specific elements Shigemori used to transform the *karesansui* garden. This is of great significance for the Japanese garden's future, as it gives us clues in what way it can be, and maybe will be, further developed and transformed.

4. Shigemori's early roots

Shigemori Mirei, born 1896 in the small village of Yoshikawa in Okayama prefecture, went to Tokyo in 1917 to study Japanese painting at the Tokyo Fine Arts School where he graduated in 1920. The following years were a time of great changes in art, with many of them originating at the *Bauhaus* in Germany. This is also where Kandinsky's book 'Point and Line to Plane' was first published³⁾. As a big admirer of Kandinsky's work, Shigemori owned this respective book⁴⁾. As the following samples will prove, this book had a profound influ-

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ence on the way Shigemori approached the design of his gardens.

Another big influence was the study and practice of tea, which Shigemori thought to be at the essence of Japanese culture, and that gave him the essential criteria and “the eyes to judge beauty”⁵⁾.

It was not until after a longer detour via the field of *ikebana* and a massive survey of several hundred of Japan’s historical gardens⁶⁾, that Shigemori in 1933 finally started to design gardens for other people.

5. Source of information

As the subject is a very visual one, most of my research is based on comparative analysis of visual information. On more than sixty site visits to projects Shigemori designed between 1937 and 1975, I created an image database of currently 2539 images. The digital images are 1600 by 1200 pixels in size and stored in jpeg-format on compact disks. The content ranges from images that depict the garden’s overall character and layout to images that represent details and special features. Images 1 and 3 are examples of the database information.

Texts and interviews supplement this information. Thanks to the plans that he published in his historical garden survey⁷⁾, I also have good records of his initial designs as they were put on paper. Furthermore I compiled a comprehensive list of his 173 garden works as well as his 70 books.

6. Methodology

The following paragraph discusses the method of selection, and the characteristic features of the filter (see also Table 1) in further detail.

Graphic Elements - the Filter: The ‘new points of departure’

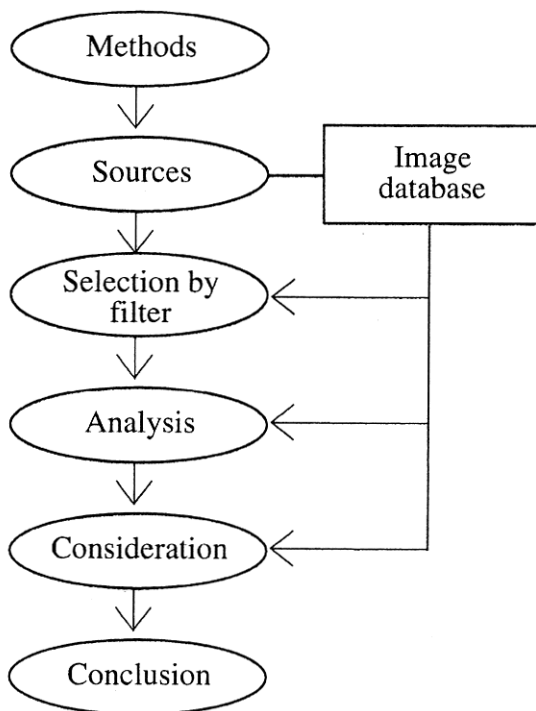


Figure 1: flowchart visualizing the basic research pattern

for the design of a garden called for equally new ways of representation. Assuming that those are visible as graphic elements, I developed a filter (see Table 1). The filter extracts from the database any garden that has at least one characteristic feature of the ‘new type *karesansui* garden’. Conceptually it is based on the graphic elements established by Kandinsky in the previously mentioned book ‘Point and Line to Plane’. I added the element of ‘font’ as it is a special mark of innovation in Shigemori’s work, but not present as such in the world of Kandinsky’s paintings. Let’s consider the elements individually:

Points are the most basic geometric feature and usually represented by stones. There can be many or few of them and they can be dispersed or aggregated. Points have a relationship with surrounding elements and there can be tension, depending on the way they are arranged.

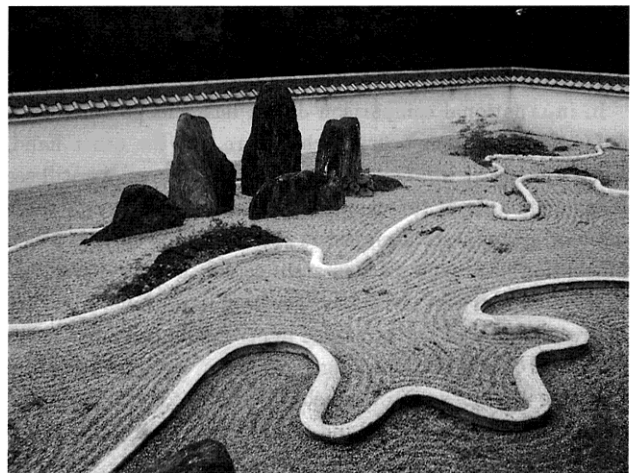


Image 1: White concrete lines at Sumiyoshi Jinja, Sasayama-cho, Hyogo Pref.

Lines can be simple and straight or curvy and very complex. Especially from the perspective of a painter, the line seems an obvious addition to a plane of gravel and the points of stone (see Image 1). This is a characteristic feature of Shigemori’s new type of *karesansui* garden and can be used to extract those gardens from the database.

Table 1: Typological Summary of the Filter

characteristic features are the graphic elements:	old type <i>karesansui</i> garden	new type <i>karesansui</i> garden
POINT	natural stones	natural and artificially shaped stones
LINE	-	appears as independent element
PLANE/ COLOR/ SHAPE	single gray plane	differently shaped planes in various colors
FONT	-	kanji characters on vertical and horizontal planes

Table 2: Results of Selection by Filter

garden name	location	year	point	line	plane/ color/ shape	font
Tofuku-ji Hojo, 'Hassou no niwa'	Higashiyama-ku, Kyoto	1939	X	X	X	
Kishiwada Castle, Hachijin no Niwa	Kishiwada, Osaka Pref.	1953	X	X	X	
Kouzen-ji	Kisofukushima-cho, Nagano Pref.	1963	X	X	X	
Ryogin-an, Tofuku-ji	Higashiyama-ku, Kyoto	1964	X	X	X	
Kitano Bijutsukan	Nagano, Nagano Pref.	1965		X	X	
Sumiyoshi Jinja	Sasayama-cho, Hyogo Pref.	1966	X	X		
Kousei-ji	Kamigyo-ku, Kyoto	1967				X
Shougen-ji	Minokamo, Gifu Pref.	1968	X	X	X	
Yashima-ji, Saboutei	Takamatsu, Kagawa Pref.	1970		X		
Mr. Ashida Suejiro	Amagasaki, Hyogo Pref.	1971		X	X	
Houkoku Jinja Shusekitei Teien	Osaka Castle, Osaka	1972		X		
Sekisou-ji	Ichishima-cho, Hyogo Pref.	1972			X	X
Honkyu-ji	Sasayama-cho, Hyogo Pref.	1974		X	X	
Tenrai-an	Kayo-cho, Okayama Pref.	1924/ 1969			X	
Kanyou-ji	Kano-cho, Yamaguchi Pref.	1969/ 1973	X	X	X	
Reiun-in, Tofuku-ji	Higashiyama-ku, Kyoto	1970 - 1971	X	X	X	
Fukuchi-in	Koya-san, Wakayama Pref.	1973 - 1975		X	X	

Image 1: White concrete lines at Sumiyoshi Jinja, Sasayama-cho, Hyogo Pref.

By their setup many of the gardens in Japan consist of a basic plane, often with walls to two or more sides. These planes are the canvases that Shigemori painted many of his concepts on, arranging points, lines and other shapes on top of them. A line describing the edge or a difference in color to a neighboring plane can define a shape. This aspect of shape and color is also a characteristic feature to find a new type *karesansui* garden. **Font** used in the garden is one of the most direct and immediate ways to overlay nature with culture, and it allows adding a layer of meaning that can hardly be achieved in a different way. Shigemori used font for the layout of gardens as well as on the sides of fences. The later I have only found in new type *karesansui* gardens.

7. Considering old and new

When applying the above filter to the image database, the criteria of 'line' and that of 'color' proved to be the most successful for the selection of works relevant to my thesis. Almost all the selected gardens (see Table 2) show these two characteristic features. 14 out of 17 selected gardens show a distinct line feature and 13 out of 17 have shapes or planes of varying colors. The garden with the perhaps strongest version of the curved line feature is at Sumiyoshi Jinja where the thick white concrete lines make a strong contrast to the gray gravel and the dark stones (Image 1). Kouzen-ji and Ryogin-an (Image 3) use the same technique in a slightly softer manner with thinner concrete lines; the later in conjunction with a colored plane. At Kishiwada Castle the zigzag line is even the size of a 30 centimeter wide stone wall and equally apparent, at least if viewed from above. And in some cases the line is

imbedded in the paving and drawn by differently textured surfaces. We can find various versions of this kind of line at Kitano Bijutsukan, Shougen-ji and Honkyu-ji.

The garden with the most colors used is certainly Sekisou-ji where we have 4 square planes consisting of black, white, red and blue gravel. At Kanyou-ji and Fukuchi-in a checkerboard pattern of red-brown and gray gravel is combined with a raster of straight stone lines dividing the plane into grid cells. The garden where I found the first use of two differently colored planes is the already mentioned Ryogin-an (Image 3). Here Shigemori combined, at the age of 68, a light gray and a dark gray gravel, and so started to paint not only with lines but also with planes of color. In the case of Tenrai-an and Houkoku Jinja these planes are then even raised and made entirely from colored concrete. This at last being a combination of the two characteristic features of line and plane, a melting into something close to a sculpture, representing the two most extreme versions of the new type *karesansui* garden. In hindsight it becomes clear that line and color are the two strongest visual characteristics that Shigemori added to his new type of *karesansui* garden. We can not find curved lines made of concrete or planes of differently colored gravel in earlier gardens by other designers. These elements in that form and use are the invention of Shigemori Mirei. And this is where his education as a painter becomes clearly evident.

A comparison of Kyoto's famous Ryoan-ji garden and the less well known one at Ryogin-an in the same town (and designed by Shigemori) shows the transformation clearly:

8. New Points of Departure

The additional graphic element of the line in conjunction with the use of color opened up much conceptual ground for



Image 2: Old type karesansui at Ryoan-ji, Ukyo-ku, Kyoto



Image 3: New type karesansui at Ryogin-an, Tofuku-ji, Higashiyama-ku, Kyoto

new designs. Shigemori no longer restricted himself to the traditional references of the *karesansui* garden. He branched out and tried various points of departure, often seeing the site

as a canvas that he painted his ideas onto. The topics range from a sea of clouds (Kouzen-ji) over the 'big dipper' - zodiac (Tofuku-ji's Hojo) to the 4 gods protecting the 4 directions (Sekisou-ji).

More research needs to be done to illuminate the conceptual and spatial aspects of the changes in Shigemori Mirei's gardening techniques.

Conclusion

When we look at the set of gardens filtered out of the image database by the above criteria, it becomes clear that Shigemori created his own type of *karesansui* garden. He accomplished this by adding the graphic element of the line and the attribute of color to the previously existing design repertoire typical of this garden type. He went about transforming the *karesansui* type garden in a way informed by his education as a painter. While few of his references are completely new, he finds different and more explicit ways to represent them.

References

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- 3) Kandinsky, V. (1926) *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche*, Verlag Albert Langen, Munchen.
- 4) According to a conversation with Shigemori Mitsuaki on July 18th 2002, the book is part of the inheritance now kept in the storehouse of the Shigemori Residence in Kyoto.
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