SPIRIT OF PLACE, PLACE OF SPIRIT
Spiritual experience in Japanese Zen temple gardens

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SUMMARY

In this bachelor thesis I studied the connection between spiritual experience and landscape design in the context of Japanese Zen temple gardens. My aim was to understand how the spirit of Zen is expressed through landscape design, and on the other hand, how Zen gardens enable further spiritual experience such as enlightenment. Through understanding the connection between spiritual experience and landscape design in this context, I hoped to gain a more universal understanding on the topic.

This thesis was concluded as a literature review. I studied the elements of Zen Buddhism and Japanese temple gardens both separately and in relation to each other. My main focus was on Muromachi era (1336-1573) Zen temple gardens, from which I chose two for further study. The two example gardens were Saihō-ji and Ryōan-ji, both situated in Kyoto.

Through this study I was able to conclude some main forms of spiritual expression in Saihō-ji and Ryōan-ji. I was also able to point out some main elements of Zen temple gardens, that can enable spiritual experiences. However, I also discuss whether a mere repetition of these elements contributes to a harmonious and spiritually inspiring space.

In this thesis I will point out a deep connection between the harmonious form of Japanese Zen temple gardens and the inner state of the monks who designed them. How this understanding can be utilized in creating more harmonious and spiritually inspiring contemporary landscape design requires further study.
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1. INTRODUCTION

The term spiritual experience generally refers to a subjective experience of a reality surpassing normal human understanding, especially a reality perceived as essential to the nature of life. (Collins English Dictionary, 2014)

Through most of the world’s history, spirituality and landscape architecture have been interconnected. Regardless of cultural and regional context, garden art has often been an important way of spiritual expression. Gardens have also acted as inspiration for contemplation and even as a catalyst for deep spiritual experience. (Rogers, 2001)

Spiritual well being is an important aspect of general well being and the benefits of spiritual practice, such as meditation, have been recognized in contemporary studies (Singh, 2014). Understanding the connection between landscape architecture and spiritual experience may aid in creating landscape design that touches people on a deep intuitive level and inspires a sense of harmony and well being.

In this thesis I chose to study spiritual experience in landscape architecture specifically in Japanese Zen Buddhist framework. There are two main reasons for narrowing the study to this context:

First of all, Zen as a form of spirituality has an inherently universal quality in it. The teachings of Zen disregard all abstractions, as well as religious and intellectual belief systems, as irrelevant to harmonious life and spiritual experience.
(Watts, 1965) In this sense Zen can not really be defined as either religion or philosophy, and Zen spirit can be interpreted through all kind of human action and lifestyles. This context offers a way to study spiritual experience free from superimposed belief systems and blind faith present in most of the worlds religions, as well as the fruitless word games of western philosophic tradition.

Secondly, Japanese Zen temple gardens are highly revered as masterpieces of garden design. Their harmony has inspired landscape designers and artists around the world, and many of them are listed as UNESCO world heritage sites. (Unesco.org, 2017) Most of the gardens have also maintained their original design and atmosphere created by some of the most revered Zen monks and artists in the history of Japan. This provides an interesting possibility for studying the role of spiritual experience in some of the most outstanding creations of landscape design in history.

My hypothesis is that one reason for the success of these gardens can be found in the spiritual intentions behind them. Zen temple gardens were built above all as expressions of the enlightened state of the monks and artists who designed them, as well as to provide an ideal setting for contemplation and spiritual experience. (Kuck, 1982)

This thesis was concluded as a literature review. My main source for understanding and verbalizing the theory and practice of Zen Buddhism was Alan Watts' work, *The way of Zen*, (1965) For understanding the history and principles of Japanese garden tradition, my main sources were Loraine Kucks *The World of the Japanese Garden* (1982), and Günter Nitschkes *Japanese Gardens* (2003).
In interpreting spiritual experiences and Zen teachings, I also made use of my own subjective experience on meditation and spirituality.

In chapters 3 and 4 I will introduce some basic elements of both Zen Buddhism and classical Japanese temple gardens. Later on, in chapters 5 and 6, I will study the connection between spiritual experience and Japanese Zen temple gardens. I will study this connection from two main perspectives: gardens as expressions of spiritual experience and gardens as catalysts for spiritual experience. My main focus is in understanding how Zen temple gardens express the spirit and teachings of Zen, and on the other hand; how these gardens inspire and enable spiritual experience on an individual level.

Towards the end of this thesis, I will bring up some general principles and elements contributing to the spiritual quality of Zen temple gardens and further discuss how this knowledge could be utilized in contemporary landscape architecture.
2. SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

In Zen Buddhist context the main form of spiritual experience is enlightenment or spiritual awakening. (Watts, 1965)

As a Buddhist term, enlightenment refers to the realization of one’s true self, and is accompanied by a sense of deep harmony and belonging. (Kapleau, 1989) In most Buddhist traditions enlightenment is attained through practicing different forms of meditation.

Apart from enlightenment there are many other forms of spiritual experiences, which have relative importance in landscape architecture, also in the context of Japanese temple gardens. For example in Shinto, the native religion of Japan, spiritual tradition includes experience of other worldly beings known as Kami, for whom temples and shrines are built, and whose presence is experienced in these sacred sites. Similar traditions are found in Abrahamic religions, where the presence of God is experienced in holy sites or sacral architecture.

However, in order to keep this thesis coherent I will approach the question of spiritual experience solely through the philosophy and spiritual framework of Zen Buddhism. It is important to keep in mind, however, the historical and cultural background of Shinto, on which Zen was introduced in Japan in the early Kamakura period (Watts, 1965), as well as the religious framework of other cultures regarding spiritual experience in relation to physical spaces.
3. ZEN BUDDHISM

In the context of Japanese temple gardens the most prominent form of spiritual tradition is that of Zen Buddhism. In order to understand and define spiritual experience in this context, a deep enough understanding of the theory and practice of Zen Buddhism is required. Therefore, in the following chapters I aim to present the key principles and practices, as well as briefly cover the history of Zen Buddhism in Japan.

In chapter five, Spirit of place, I will study further the way in which the spiritual experience and philosophy of Zen has affected the garden tradition, of Japanese Zen temples. Later in chapter six, Place of spirit, I will study the ways in which Zen gardens could act as a catalyst for spiritual experience on an individual level.

3.1 BRIEF HISTORY OF ZEN IN JAPAN

Zen (禅), from Chinese Chán (禪), is a philosophy that originated in China through the merging of Indian Buddhism and Chinese Taoism starting in the late 5th century. (Watts, 1965)

Zen arrived in Japan during the early Kamakura period, 1185–1333, and was integrated to the ruling samurai culture,
forming *Bushido*, the unique lifestyle code of the samurai. (Watts, 1965)

From this time forward Zen Buddhism had a great impact on Japanese culture in all the fields from art to architecture, through the whole Muromachi and Togukawa periods all the way until the 1868 Meiji restoration, that made Shintoism the official religion of Japan, as well as opened the country to Western influence. (Sansom, 1984) It can be said that the most traditions and aesthetics that we nowadays see as inherently Japanese are a result of the influence of Zen philosophy in the Japanese culture during these six centuries. (Nitschke, 2003)

Even after the restoration Zen continued and transformed in the new situation, and for example the temples of Saihō-ji and Ryōan-ji studied in this thesis, are still active Zen temples. After the Second World War, Zen gained increasing interest in the West, and western scholars travelled to Japan in order to study it. Today there are a lot of Zen temples all around the world and the practice of Zen has gained widespread popularity also in the West.

In this thesis I will focus especially on the Muromachi period (1336-1573), when Zen had the deepest influence in Japanese culture, and some of the most notable Zen art, gardens, and poetry were created. (Nitschke, 2003)

3.2 Principles of Zen Buddhism

After forming in China, starting from the late 5th century, Zen Buddhism has developed and divided into multiple schools, from which two of the most influential in
Japan have been, and still are, Sōtō (曹洞) and Rinzai (臨済). (Watts, 1965)

Though Different schools emphasise different aspects of Zen, especially in practice, the key principles and the spirit of the teachings remains the same.

Zen Buddhist teachings are very difficult to verbalize since the whole teaching has always relied on some sort of direct experience. It can be said, that as in Mahayana Buddhism and Taoism, from which Zen developed, the key concept of Zen is that of emptiness or stillness. (Watts, 1965) In Buddhism the concept is called śūnyatā, and refers to the idea that all things are empty of intrinsic and independent existence and nature (Kalu-pahana, 1987). In Taoism it is called tao (道). According to Lao-tzus Tao Te Ching:

_In the beginning was the Tao._

_All things issue from it;_

_all things return to it._

(Translated by Mitchell, 1988)

The general “aim” of Zen Buddhist practice is to realize ones true nature, inseparable from this origin of things. This realization brings forth enlightenment, that is, a state of consciousness free from the mental construct of a separate ego. Enlightenment is followed by the aim to express this awakened state in ones everyday life thus becoming a Bodhisattva, a living Buddha. (Watts, 1965)

The basic method on the journey to enlightenment in Zen, as in most other forms of Buddhism, is meditation. Meditation is sometimes associated with the idea of contemplation, meaning profound
thinking of a spiritual concept, such as the nature of life and death. However, Zen meditation is generally not contemplation, since its aim is to pass beyond the thinking mind to a state of mu-shin (無心), meaning "no-mind".¹ (Watts, 1965)

Despite this translation, mu-shin does not refer to an unconscious or trance like state. Quite contrary, it is accompanied by full awareness of the surrounding world. It is only the ego that has transcended. Thus mu-shin is a state of consciousness, where there is no distinction between perception and some abstract subject that perceives. There is no separate thinker behind thought, and thus the mind and the world arise mutually. (Watts, 1965)

A Zenrin Kushû² poem states:

_The geese do not wish to leave their reflection behind;

The water has no mind to retain their image._

(Translated by Blyth, 1981)

Mu-shin is related to another concept in Zen Buddhism, which is the idea of Buddha nature. In essence this refers to the idea that all beings are inherently Buddhas, that is, in a perfect state of harmony, but have not yet awakened to realize this. Thus through attaining a state of mu-shin, all beings have the potential to be enlightened through ji-riki, power from oneself (Nitschke, 2003).

Somewhat paradoxically, all attempts

¹ An exception to this would be the contemplation of Koans, especially in the Rinzai school of Japanese Zen
² Zenrin Kushû is a collection of Zen teachings from various teachers that was compiled by Eicho (1429-1504)
of the mind to reach enlightenment are seen as hindrance on the way to enlightenment (Watts, 1965). Another pair of Zenrin poems states:

*It cannot be attained by mind;*
*It is not to be sought after through mindlessness.*

*It cannot be created by speech;*
*It cannot be penetrated by silence.*

A Japanese Zen master Bankei Yōtaku (1622-1693) described the attempt of the mind to know itself in search of enlightenment as "washing blood in blood"; Even if one manages to wash away the original blood, the stains are only replaced with more blood, since the washing was still done in blood. In the same way any conscious attempt to free oneself from the mind only causes an unsolvable bind as the mind that is trying to free itself is the mind to be freed from. (Watts, 1965)

Since all attempts to understand enlightenment only lead away from it, Zen avoids getting hung up in trying to intellectually define enlightenment by highlighting direct and natural being to the extreme. Zen is taught, above all as a practice. (Watts, 1965) Theories, especially metaphysical concepts and belief systems, are absent in the teaching of Zen. Instead the spirit of Zen is transmitted through a wide range of practices from formal meditation to arts and poetry. (Watts, 1965)

In relation to the context of Japanese temple gardens, the key point in Zen philosophy is the aim to bring forth the realization of one’s true self as a part of the
universal stillness. This realization is in RinzaZen called satori (悟り) or kenshō (見性). (Kapleau, 1989) Satori is then followed by a sense of harmony, which one expresses through all forms of Zen practice. In the following chapters I will go through different aspects of Zen practice, and further illustrate the way in which these practices lead to, and express, spiritual experience.

3.3

FORMAL PRACTICE OF ZEN

In this chapter I will briefly cover the key aspects of practicing Zen, both in the context of more institutional monasteries, as well as in everyday life. Temple gardens of the Muromachi period reflect the way in which Zen was practiced at the time, and in order to understand the connection between these gardens and spiritual experience, it is important to understand the tradition of Zen Buddhist practice the gardens provided a setting for.

The more institutional ways of practicing Zen in monasteries and temples are zazen and Zen koan. Zazen (座禅), translating to “sitting Zen” is the practice of meditation, where monks sit still for periods of time. The purpose of zazen is simply to sit, that is, to naturally let the world, and thoughts flow by without clinging to them. (Suzuki, 2011) The idea is that by letting the mind naturally still itself, one lets go of the need to control thoughts and attains a state of mu-shin. This leads to a natural and harmonious state of being. (Watts, 1965)

A poem from Zenrin Kushû states:
Sitting quietly, doing nothing,
Spring comes, grass grows by itself.

(Translated by Blyth, 1981)

In modern day Zen, especially the Sōtō school, puts great emphasis on zazen as the main form of Zen practice. (Watts, 1965)

Koan (公案), on the other hand, is a paradoxical riddle that the student contemplates on in order to free the mind and reach an insight or satori. By answering a koan presented by the teacher, a monk would demonstrate their understanding of Zen. (Watts, 1965)

In modern day Rinzai school standardised sets of koan make up the basic system of studying Zen, and through solving the koans, the student moves on in their studies. (Watts, 1965) However, this formal way of studying Zen is a later development, and thus is not really relevant to the study of temple gardens of the Muromachi era.

3.4
Zen and the Everyday

The most interesting aspect of practicing Zen, and also one of the most relevant in the context of temple gardens, is the way in which it relates to the world in an everyday context. In Zen, the world as such is seen as being one with the ultimate reality, and everyday life is seen as spiritual practice. After all for people, who are a part of it, and grow out of it, the world as such is the only tangible reality.
Unlike some other forms of Buddhism, as well as many other religions, Zen puts no emphasis on afterlife, or any other dimension of existence than the present. Zen teachings do not deny nor confirm anything out of this world. Instead they disregard them as irrelevant. The essence is that since it is impossible to have definite understanding of metaphysical concepts, it is better to remain silent. (Watts, 1965)

When leaving behind attempts to understand things that are beyond comprehension, people find a more harmonious and sincere way of being in the present moment. It is this way of being that demonstrates a profound understanding of Zen. Simplest tasks or events, like drinking water or watching a leaf float in a stream are seen as ways of practicing Zen. It is essential, that practice, or even enlightenment, is not to be separated from the everyday world. (Watts, 1965)

As Ikkyū Sōjun (1394-1481) puts it in his doka poem:

_The dew on the lotus leaf_
_Undyed by its colour,_
_Just as it is,_
_Is the Real Form of Buddha._

or more directly:

_We eat, excrete, sleep, and get up;_
_This is our world._
_All we have to do after that,—_
_Is to die._

(Translated by Blyth, 1979)
This idea of Zen being practiced through all the aspects of life formed many of the Japanese traditions still alive today. Zen was integrated into many aspects of the Japanese culture, developing traditions to have spiritual qualities. These practices became known as dō (道). From Chinese tao, meaning way or path. (Watts, 1965) Some well-known examples of these paths are martial arts like judō (柔道), the gentle way, and kendo (剣道), the way of the sword. Also, many forms of art and culture became ways for spiritual life. Examples for these are chadō (茶道), the Japanese tea ceremony, and kadō (華道), or ikebana (生け花), the way of flower arrangement.

In the same way, the art of gardening was seen by the monks as a way of spiritual life, and many famous monks and landscape artists used gardening as a medium for spiritual expression. (Kuck, 1982)

3.5

Change

Appreciating the flow of the world has been very essential in Japanese mindset and aesthetics. Emphasis on change is a common factor of East Asian culture and spiritual tradition. The world is seen to be in a constant flow of everlasting cycles of change powered by the forces of Yin and Yang balancing each other out in a dynamic harmony. (Watts, 1965) Based on this view of the world, the importance of the negative side of the cycle is understood and appreciated.

This differs greatly from the general Western view, where emphasis is on growth and the way of the world is seen as linear rather than cyclical. This leads
us to consider the negative side of the cycle as something to be avoided.

In the Buddhist and Taoist traditions, from which Zen is derived, life is seen, not as the opposite of death but as the whole process of birth and death repeating itself, thus moving the world. A world without death would be as static as a world without birth, as they arise mutually and are only existing in relation to each other in the same way as “up” exists only in relation to “down”. (Watts, 1965)

Even though Zen remains silent on metaphysical concepts, such as the cycle of rebirth, the appreciation of natural change is evident. Change, especially the downward part of the cycle has great emphasis in many forms of Zen inspired art such as poetry.

Yoshida Kenkō (1284-1350) writes in Tsurezuregusa:³

> If man were never to fade away like the dews of Adashino, never to vanish like the smoke over Toribeyama, but lingered on forever in the world, how things would lose their power to move us! The most precious thing in life is its uncertainty

(Translated by Keene, 1998)

This wistful appreciation towards the disappearing is in Japanese aesthetics called, *mono no aware* (物の哀れ). It dates back to literature from the Heian period (794-1185), thus being a part of Japanese aesthetics already before the introduction of Zen philosophy, which

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³ Yoshida Kenkō was a Buddhist monk and Tsurezuregusa is a collection of his essays, a highly revered work of Japanese literature.
continued to emphasise it as an important part of its teaching. (Parkes, 2017)

In gardens, as in nature, the appreciation towards change is evident in highlighting the change of seasons. Japanese gardens, when they have vegetation in them, are often arranged so, that they change along with the seasons. Flowering trees, such as cherries and plums, as well as trees with bright autumn colours are often used. (Kuck, 1982) An example of *mono no aware* in temple gardens along with *yugen* (幽玄), the feeling of mystery awakened by a sense of unity with the eternal, can be found in the moss garden of Saihō-ji, which will be studied further in chapter 5.1. (Kuck, 1982)

The significance of cherry trees is especially great as they act as a symbol of the whole idea of the ephemeral nature of life. (Parkes, 2017) Cherries blossom brightly early in the spring, only to shed their petals after a few days of blooming. As such they awaken a wistful appreciation towards life, as it will eventually fade away like the cherry blossoms fall from the trees.

### 3.6

**Zen and nature**

Since appreciation towards the world as such, as well as the eternal cycle of change is essential in Zen Buddhism, it is not surprising that nature has been a great source of inspiration for Zen monks and scholars. Monks, used to wander around in the mountains from temple to temple, or spent long periods of time in solitude, meditating and living simple life in the nature. (Watts, 1965)
The inspiration gained from the mountainous wilderness of Japan and China can be seen in many forms of Zen art, such as landscape painting, poetry and landscape design. Many of the Muromachi era temple gardens can be seen as representations of the great landscape of the surrounding mountains or faraway lands. (Kuck, 1982)

It seems plausible, that monks who settled in temples used the medium of landscape design to express the inspiration gained from their travels, and created gardens that would reciprocally, provide a further source of inspiration by expressing the essence of natural beauty.

In the following chapter, I will study further the formal elements of Zen gardens in relation to the overall Japanese garden tradition, as well as the tradition of landscape painting, which was another significant form of Zen expression in the Muromachi era. (Kuck, 1982)
4. ZEN GARDENS

Due to the deep connection Zen philosophy has with both nature and art, it does not come as a surprise that one of the most prominent forms of Zen Buddhist expression has been laying out gardens. Though Zen Buddhism arrived in Japan already in the Kamakura period, it was during the Muromachi period that the artistic expression and philosophy of Zen truly flourished. During this time some of the best known Zen art was created, including the most revered gardens in Kyoto, such as the dry rock garden of Ryōan-ji, which I will study deeper in chapter 5.3. (Nitschke, 2003)

Japanese Zen gardens are a quite unique example of garden art in the sense that they are among the only gardens in their time which were laid out with primarily spiritual intentions (Kuck, 1982). Most gardens of the time were built around private estates of rulers and wealthy upper class people, and as such were meant, first of all, for recreation. The purpose of these gardens was mainly to provide a pleasant setting for the estate, as well as to enable and inspire cultural and creative activities, such as poetry. (Kuck, 1982)

Small Zen temple gardens, on the other hand had as their sole purpose the aiding of contemplation. These gardens were designed and laid out by Zen monks and scholars as an artistic expression of their philosophy and relationship with the infinite. (Kuck, 1982)
4.1

Typical elements of Japanese temple gardens

Zen temple gardens of the Muromachi era are a continuity of a long development of landscape design in Japan. The aesthetic principles for the gardens were mainly adopted from Chinese landscape gardens starting from the Nara period (710-794), and further refined during the centuries to follow. (Kuck, 1982) Even though classical Japanese gardens differ from one another in size, elements and composition, certain recurring elements can be highlighted as the main themes and elements of Japanese garden tradition. (Mori, 1962) In the following chapters I will briefly introduce some of these main elements in order to provide an understanding of the garden tradition to which Zen temple gardens were integrated.

4.1.1

Water elements

Due to the hot and humid summer, the presence of cooling water elements was highly valued in classical Japanese gardens. Ponds were created by using the water from natural fountains and streams, and often small islands were built to offer access to the centre of the water. Islands were usually connected by bridges. (Mori, 1962)

If the building of large ponds was not practical, wide streams were used to provide the refreshing and peaceful atmosphere induced by the presence of water. Waterfalls were often created as a part of
the stream, and the sound and energy of the glistening water created a refreshing atmosphere. (Mori, 1962)

4.1.2 HILLS AND MOUNTAINS

As the classical Japanese gardens were mostly landscape gardens, the attempt to represent and replicate the mountainous landscape of Japan resulted in the creation of steep rock formations. Often the aim was not to create a miniature of a whole mountain, but to recreate the atmosphere of a part of the mountain scenery, such as a steep mountain path. (Mori, 1962)

On the other hand in some cases miniatures of whole mountains were created, often on islands in the back of the garden, to provide a visual representation of faraway mountains. (Mori, 1962)

4.1.3 ROCKS AND SAND

The tradition of karesansui (枯山水), the dry landscape garden, dates back to the Heian era landscape gardens. If water was not available, the elements of streams and ponds were represented by areas of sand or rocks. (Mori, 1962) In the Muromachi era, karesansui gardens were used by Zen monks as expressions of spiritual insight and adopted a more abstract and simplified form. (Nitschke, 2003)
It should be stated that the spiritual importance of natural rocks in Japanese cultural context stems from a far older origin than Zen Buddhism. In ancient Shinto shrines special rocks were felt to be sacred and seen as abodes for deities. These individual rocks or rock formations were marked with a shime-nawa, a rope marking the significance of the site. Rocks have since acquired a quite archetypical significance in Japanese gardens and basically all classical Japanese gardens have some sort of natural rock formation as a significant element. (Nitschke, 2003)

4.1.4

PATHS AND BORDERS

In most of the classical Japanese gardens the scenery could be experienced both from a fixed vantage point in a building, or by strolling through the garden along carefully placed paths. If the garden had ponds or streams, bridges would often connect the islands or two sides of the stream. (Mori, 1962)

The gardens borders were often marked by a fence or a hedge. The fence was never to be too conspicuous, but merged to the natural scenery. Hedges could in some cases be used to mimic the form of distant mountains in order to provide a background as well as merge the garden scenery to the view beyond. (Mori, 1962)
4.1.5 Trees and Vegetation

Especially in gardens before the late Muromachi era naturally growing trees were used as part of the garden composition. Later, the smaller scale of gardens called for trees to be pruned in order to keep them in proportion with other garden elements. (Mori, 1962) Trees were used to highlight the change of seasons. Flowering trees, such as Japanese cherry (Prunus serrulata), as well as trees with bright autumn colours, such as Japanese maple (Acer palmatum) were used. During the winter, evergreens like pines (Pinus thunbergii) stood up from the garden landscape. (Nitschke, 2003)

Apart from trees, the vegetation of classical Japanese gardens was quite scarce. Multiple species of moss were used on the garden floor, but for example flower beds were not part of the tradition. (Nitschke, 2003)

4.2 Landscape Painting to Landscaping

When discussing Zen gardens, the influence of Chinese landscape paintings, in particular of the Sung school (960–1279) cannot be ignored. This unique style of painting with black ink first arrived in Japan with Zen monks who travelled back and forth between the countries during the Kamakura period. (Kuck, 1982) It was fast adopted by Japanese artists, monks and scholars, and peaked during the Muromachi period among with other forms of Zen inspired art such as haiku (俳句) and tanka (短歌) poetry. The Jap-
The Japanese name for the style is *sumi-e* (墨絵) meaning literally ink painting. (Watts, 1965)

It should be mentioned that these various forms of art were often interconnected as the monks and scholars, who created them rarely confined themselves to only one medium. Instead Zen spirit was expressed in various forms and activities being more of a lifestyle than a style of art or a belief system. Great example of a Zen person like this is the best known Japanese *sumi-e* painter, Sesshū Tōyō (1420-1506), who was also a Zen monk, a landscape artist and a poet. (Kuck, 1982)

Due to the fact that the distinctive style of Zen temple gardens was refined after the introduction of *sumi-e* in Japanese culture, it can be concluded that the inspiration for these gardens was found in the subtle form of the ink paintings. (Kuck, 1982)

Both the paintings and the gardens, especially *karesansui*, the dry rock gardens, have great emphasis on space and emptiness. In *sumi-e* a few definite strokes on an otherwise empty paper or silk canvas bring life to the entire picture. (Kuck, 1982) From another perspective, the emptiness of the paper allows the image to appear, and one would not be without the other. (Watts, 1965) Similarly in the *karesansui* garden, the few simple elements of rocks and in some cases moss manage to fill the whole garden with a harmonious sense of presence.

This emphasis on harmony and emptiness distinguishes Zen gardens as very unique settings for spiritual experience, and in the following chapter I will study further the ways in which these gardens express the spirit of Zen.
Image 1: A sumi-e by Sesshū Tōyō
5. SPIRIT OF PLACE

Principles of Zen expressed through landscape design

In this chapter I will go through the ways in which the basic principles of Zen Buddhism, described in chapter three, are expressed in Japanese Zen temple gardens. I will focus mainly on the ways in which the spirit of Zen is expressed in the design of the gardens, where as in the next chapter, I will study further the way in which these gardens act as a catalyst for spiritual experience on an individual level.

In my mind, the relationship between these two aspects can be seen as a circular development where:

1. A spiritual experience is expressed through the medium of an art form, such as, in this case, a garden.

and

2. This form of art acts as a catalyst for a spiritual experience by another individual

who then possibly proceeds to express it in his or her own way, continuing the cycle.
As I pointed out in chapter three, Zen emphasizes that attainment through thinking is impossible, as in a sense the thinking mind, looking for attainment, is exactly what stands in the way of itself. It is in the nature of Zen to treat enlightenment as something natural and immediate. (Watts, 1965) For this reason the way in which the experience is passed on is through methods which aim to point at the experience directly, without symbolism or complicated theories. (Watts, 1965)

This context in mind, I will go through some key aspects of Zen gardens that express and point toward the spiritual essence of Zen Buddhism. In order to tie these ideas to practice, I will study these elements in relation to two significant Zen gardens; Saihō-ji, which is among the earliest Zen temple gardens, and Ryōan-ji, which can be seen as the pinnacle of abstract karesansui gardens in the Muromachi era. Both gardens are situated in Kyoto. (Nitschke, 2003)
The temple garden of Saihō-ji, is according to contemporary research, dated back to Shinto origins of Matsuo shrine, somewhere in 700 AD. Its later Pure Land Buddhist form was created by Fujiwara Morokazu during the Kenkyu era (1190-1198), and the Zen Buddhist form by an influential Zen monk, Muso Kokushi in 1337. (Kuck, 1982)

Pure Land Buddhism is a school of Buddhism, which has been influential in Japan from the twelfth century to the present. Its practice is based on praying for Amitābha Buddha, who was said to refuse leaving the illusion of the world and attaining Buddhahood until all other beings were enlightened. (Skilton, 1997) In Pure Land Buddhism it is believed that by praying for Amitābha, one is reborn in his western paradise, where one would be free from suffering and thus close to attaining enlightenment. (Kuck, 1982)

Starting from late Heian era (794-1185) many temple gardens were built to represent Amitābhas western paradise. Saihō-ji followed this tradition of creating a paradise on earth with its traditional elements, such as a celestial lake. (Kuck, 1982)

Saihō-ji marks the transition point between Heian era Pure Land paradise gardens and Zen influenced Muromachi gardens (Kuck, 1982). After its construction, the garden was maintained by the Fujiwara family. Multiple floods washed over the garden, and moss grew thicker on its surface. After almost 150 years, the temple of Saihō-ji was reconstructed as a Zen temple by Muso Kokushi. Probably deeply inspired by the ancient feel of the
Image 2: A detail from Saihō-ji (Julia Donner, 2017)
mossy garden, he maintained most of its original form mainly adding temple buildings. (Kuck, 1982)

With its origins in representing the Western Paradise, Saihō-ji is not just a maintained and arranged piece of nature but in a sense represents all nature in its essence. However, unlike some landscape gardens after it, the garden does not attempt to be a miniature of a vast landscape. Instead Saihō-ji is an idealisation of the nature surrounding it in its own scale. It captures the essence of the aspects of nature highly valued in Japanese aesthetics. (Kuck, 1982)

The ancient feel of Saihō-ji makes it appear as if the garden was indeed some natural paradise forest. However, the natural and harmonious atmosphere is somewhat paradoxically achieved through careful and precise placement and maintenance of the garden elements. The composition achieves a sense of effortlessness. It seems as it was formed naturally and randomly, and yet all the elements are exactly in the right place in order to create a profound sense of harmony. (Kuck, 1982)

5.2

Eternal change

The spiritual essence of Saihō-ji is in the tranquil mood of time passing by called in Japanese aesthetics yugen. (Kuck, 1982) Yugen refers to the atmosphere of mystery felt when one's spirit feels united with the eternal spirit prevailing all nature. (Kuck, 1982) (Watts, 1965)
Interestingly another concept present in Saihō-ji is the fleeting quality of time. The garden, when renewed by Muso Kokushī, had cherry trees, as well as Japanese maples in it, both of which express the change of seasons and the flow of time contrasting the ancient feel of the old moss garden. (Kuck, 1982) This brings forth the feeling of aware, the wistful appreciation of life fading away.

The combination of yugen and aware in Saihō-ji expresses the atmosphere of Zen towards man as part of the eternal. Even though being a fleeting form, like the sakura flowers, affected by the inevitable flow of time, man is seen as one with the eternal stillness behind the play of form. Both aspects of form and emptiness, change and eternity, mutually create the world and man as a part of it. (Watts, 1965)
It can be argued that the abstract, yet soulful simplicity of Zen gardens pinnacled in the karesansui of Ryōan-ji. This masterpiece of landscape art is the one supreme karesansui garden from which all the others stemmed. (Kuck, 1982)

The garden lies in the inner courtyard of Ryōan-ji temple next to the main building of the complex. Enclosed behind an earthen wall, it is only visible from the veranda of the temple building, or the rooms surrounding it. (Kuck, 1982)

The garden consists of an almost flat rectangular surface of raked white sand on which lie fifteen rocks in three groups of seven, five, and three.

Many interpretations of the meaning or logic behind the composition have been made. The rocks are said to symbolise islands in an ocean, or tiger cubs crossing a river. No interpretation has gained widespread popularity and the intellectual meaning, if any, behind the garden remains a mystery. (Nitschke, 2003)

The exact time of building the garden is unknown but it is generally dated back to the late 15th century after the Onin war (1467-1477), when the temple of Ryōan-ji was amended and a new building was added. (Kuck, 1982)

Like the date of the garden, also the person responsible of its artistic expression remains unknown. Some claim the garden to be the work of Sōami, a famous Zen monk and artist, who is also responsible for the design of the rock garden in Ginkaku-ji. Others claim it to be designed by the kawara-mono, experienced river-bank workmen, who carried out the concrete building of the garden. (Nitschke,
Image 3: A detail from Ryōan-ji (Julia Donner, 2017)
Some even speculate that the garden could have been designed by Sesshū, who at the time had returned from China and designed the garden of Jōei-ji in Yamaguchi. (Kuck, 1982)

5.4
Expressing Nothing

Especially for people from a western cultural context the composition of Ryōan-ji may awaken an attempt to understand the purpose and symbolism of the positioning of the rocks. We often tend to take a very analytical approach to studying the world even in the inherently intuitive realms of arts and spirituality. However, as concluded in chapter three, attempting to intellectually understand the teaching of Zen inevitably fails if it is not accompanied by a realization of the tacit essence of the teachings. (Watts, 1965)

Despite a number of attempts to study the composition of Ryōan-ji, contemporary scholars generally conclude that it does not follow any logical form or geometry. Instead the rocks are arranged without measurements or calculation. (Kuck, 1982) On the other hand the composition is not entirely random and natural either. If rocks were thrown on a stretch of white sand, the chance of them arranging in as settled and elegant formation as in the garden is non-existent.

Thus the garden expresses the inner and inert harmony of the monk responsible for its design. The garden, like a sumi-e painting is created intuitively. Like the strokes in the painting are at the same time purposeful and natural, the composition of Ryōan-ji appears from the artis-
tic and spiritual insight of the monk who directed the building. (Kuck, 1982)

Since it was created with the aid of Zen monks, it is safe to say that the real meaning behind Ryōan-ji lies not in any symbolism, but rather in the garden as such. (Nitschke, 2003) As the ideal state of meditation is that of mu-shin, the spiritual intention behind the garden was never to express any theory or thought form. Contemplating the symbolism of the composition in search for enlightenment would only be, as Bankei put it, washing blood in blood.

The spirit of Ryōan-ji lies in the physical form of the garden itself. In the end, the abstract composition of forms expresses nothing outside of itself. The garden is not a symbol, not even a symbol of form and space arising mutually. It is in itself a harmonious set of natural forms in space, and as such, I see that it is intended to be taken in directly as it is, with no interpretation.
6. PLACE OF SPIRIT

Gardens as catalysts and settings for spiritual experience

In the previous chapter I described the way in which some key teachings of Zen are expressed through landscape design in Zen temple gardens. In this chapter I will move on to the other aspect of the cycle, where these expressions of spiritual insight aid in the attainment of spiritual experience on an individual level.

Since I have narrowed my study in this thesis to the context of Zen Buddhism, the forms of spiritual experience discussed here are narrowed accordingly. My main focus is in the way in which Zen temple gardens aid in attaining satori, or spiritual awakening, as well as aid in maintaining the state of harmony which follows.

Satori, as described in chapter 3.2 is a sudden realization of something profound about the nature of oneself and the world. Even though after attaining satori, one returns to an ordinary state of consciousness, this experience is not limited to the moment of the realization, but is then worked through intuitively, and expressed in one's everyday life. (Suzuki, 2011)

Unlike some other practices of medi-
tation, like certain Yoga traditions, Zen practice does not promote a state of rapture or trance. Quite contrary Zen highlights the expression of spiritual experience in the everyday life. Thus spiritual experience in this context can also be the general sense of belonging, following the realization that one is not separate from the world and universal stillness behind it. (Watts, 1965)

In the following chapters I will point out some elements of Zen gardens, which can generally aid in spiritual attainment. As the spiritual experience of Zen does not relate to any religious or intellectual dogma, understanding these elements in the context of Zen may aid in finding some general principles underlying spiritual experience in landscape architecture.

6.1
Symbolising the essence

As described in chapter 4, many Zen temple gardens follow similar principles to the sumi-e paintings, creating images of vast landscapes; or like the garden of Saihō-ji, create an idealized representation of nature. Both of these ways of expression aim to capture the essence of nature as something greater than the garden itself. (Kuck, 1982)

In all its simplicity, Zen inspired art aims to capture the essence of whatever it is portraying in the same way as Zen philosophy aims to capture the essence of life itself. This aids in contemplating the nature of the world and man as part of it. (Watts, 1965)

The garden elements are at the same time individual forms of rocks, vegeta-
tion, and ponds, and yet in essence represent all nature from tall mountains to vast oceans. (Kuck, 1982) In the same way a Zen monk in meditation is not just an individual human being, but at the same time, in essence he is one with the whole universe. (Watts, 1965)

This realization can thus be experienced through the symbolism of the temple gardens. However, as concluded in chapter three, the actual spiritual experience cannot arise through conscious effort to reach it through contemplation. (Watts, 1965) The symbols are there to point to a reality beyond themselves. The actual experience is immediate and tacit. In fact I would argue that often contemplation is not a means to attaining satori, but something to do after attaining one.

Symbols, language included, are a way of pointing to a reality beyond themselves. In order to truly understand what the symbol represents, a subjective experience of this reality is often needed. A popular example of this could be the experience of falling in love. A numerous amount of art, music, and language is used to describe the experience, and yet only after a subjective experience of falling in love, one truly understands, what these symbols tried to convey.

This is especially true in spiritual matters where the symbolism, including language, describing the reality is more ambiguous. Thus I see that the symbolism of Zen gardens does not in itself enable the attainment of satori. Instead the symbolic quality of these gardens aids in maintaining the sense of harmony after satori by pointing towards the truth behind itself in the same way as after falling in love, only a simple symbol is needed for the individual to vividly remember the experience behind it.
6.2

**EXPERIENCING THE FLOW OF THE WORLD**

A major concept in Zen Buddhism is the impermanence of all forms, and the dynamic harmony of change. Zen accepts man as a physical being affected by the flow of the world they grew out of. At the same time, however, without any dualistic distinction between mind and body, one is in unity with the universal stillness behind the changing forms. The two arise mutually. (Watts, 1965)

As demonstrated by the garden of Saihō-ji, the atmosphere for this kind of contemplation is aided greatly by presence of vegetation that presents the change of seasons, and thus the flow of time. When visiting a garden like Saihō-ji, and especially when staying there for a longer period of time, the flow of time is clearly experienced in the yearly changes of the garden.

Realizing and accepting the impermanence of all forms, including ones own body and mind, releases one from the suffering followed by attempts to cling to the world of form. Through this realization one is free to appreciate the world as it is, enjoying things while they last, and letting them go once they fade away. (Watts, 1965) This experience is accompanied by the mysterious feeling of something eternal beyond the play of forms. In Saihō-ji, the timeless quality can be sensed in the ancient atmosphere of the moss garden and the stable and harmonious formations of rocks rising gently from the sea of moss. (Kuck, 1982)
Understanding the inevitability of change, combined with a sense of unity with the all prevailing stillness, brings forth a deep sense of harmony. It releases one from the anxiety of seeking permanence in an impermanent world, and allows for a sincere and immediate way of relating to the present.

6.3

Presence

Another way in which Zen gardens enable a spiritual experience is by guiding ones attention entirely to the present moment. In Zen the present is seen as the only reality. No experience happens outside the present moment and therefore the only real life is now. (Watts, 1965) This view is supported by notable contemporary spiritual teachers like Eckhart Tolle, who writes about it from a western perspective in his work, The Power of Now. (Tolle, 2004)

The state of complete presence is essentially a state free from judgment and attempts to cling to forms. The world flows by and yet at the same time stays absolutely still. Achieving a complete sense of presence is essentially reaching a state of Buddhahood, where the individual ego transcends and consciousness becomes one with the world. (Watts, 1965) In this state one is not defined by the past nor seeks for salvation from the future. Instead, by being fully present in the moment, one finds harmony trough acceptance of what is. (Tolle, 2004)

A state of presence can be seen as the aim of Zen meditation. At the same time, being completely present is an expression of ones inert Buddha nature. (Watts,
1965) As mentioned in chapter 3.4, Zen meditation is not a means to reaching enlightenment. Meditation, and full present moment awareness is in itself an expression of the enlightened state. The aim of Zen practice is in the practice itself. (Watts, 1965)

From the temple gardens of Muromachi era, perhaps the best example in promoting a sense of presence is Ryōan-ji. The karesansui garden was created as an object of contemplation as well as a representation of the landscape designers insight and enlightenment. As a work of spiritually inspired art, it can be either contemplated intellectually or felt intuitively. (Nitschke, 2003)

Once the mind ceases to contemplate the form of the garden intellectually, the composition is observed directly, without interpretation. The abstract simplicity and harmony of the rock composition enables the viewer to experience the scene as whole. (Nitschke, 2003) When attention is not caught by any particular object in the scene, the mind can flow freely and consciousness reaches a state of mushin.

6.4 Harmony

As stated in the previous chapters, the spiritual experience in Zen temple gardens is not limited to the flash of insight at the moment of satori. Instead it is followed by a deep sense of harmony and belonging, which is then cultivated in Zen practice. (Suzuki, 2011)

Zen temple gardens promote a sense of harmony trough the atmosphere they cre-
ate. Regardless of differences in symbolism, elements, and composition, all Zen temple gardens share an atmosphere of tranquillity. Whether it is the calm ancient paradise of in Saihō-ji, or the captivating presence of Ryōan-ji, letting ones consciousness lie in the scenery promotes a profound sense of harmony. (Nitschke, 2003, Kuck, 1982)

The individual elements that bring about this soothing atmosphere are hard to specify. The two examples differ drastically from each other in all aspects from size to vegetation, yet share something similar in their core. One common factor in both of the gardens would be extreme balance of composition. Even though more conspicuous in the simplicity of Ryōan-ji, a balance between all the elements of the garden is central in creating the atmosphere of both gardens.

Another important aspect in reaching a harmonious and calm state of mind, when visiting the gardens, is the visitors own perspective. The gardens surroundings hold great importance in promoting an open and calm state of mind. Both of the example gardens are still within active Zen temple complexes, and the spirit of Zen can thus be sensed even before one has sight of the garden itself. In fact, when visiting the temple of Saihō-ji one is asked to observe and take part in the temples practices, which include chanting, and copying of sutras, Buddhist texts. These activities take approximately an hour before the visitor is allowed access to the garden. (Japan-guide.com, 2016)

When the mind is already calm, the spirit of the place is felt more directly, as thoughts and emotions do not interfere with the experience the way they normally would.
7. RESULTS

In this thesis I studied the connection between spiritual experience and landscape design in the context of Muromachi era Zen temple gardens. My aim was to gain further understanding on how the principles of Zen were expressed in landscape design, as well as, how Zen temple gardens can promote spiritual experience such as *satori*.

As Zen Buddhism does not relate to any religious or intellectual dogma (Watts, 1965), I concluded that understanding the connection between landscape design and spiritual experience in this context would provide a basis for more universal understanding of the subject. This understanding could then be applied to contemporary landscape design.

The two main aspects of my study were the ways in which Zen teachings and insights are expressed in Muromachi era landscape design, and how these insights are then transmitted through Zen temple gardens, enabling further spiritual experience. Through studying Zen teachings in relation to two Zen gardens, Saihō-ji and Ryōan-ji, I was able to identify some general principles of spiritual expression in these gardens.

In Saihō-ji some of the main forms of spiritual expression are the emphasis on the dynamic harmony of change and eternity expressed by the ancient atmosphere of the garden, together with an emphasis on the changing seasons. (Kuck, 1982) This reflects the nature of man in
unity with the harmony of the cosmos. (Watts, 1965)

In Ryōan-ji the essence of spiritual expression is more tacit. The composition of Ryōan-ji is not meant as a symbol or object for contemplation, but rather as an expression of spiritual insight as itself (Kuck, 1982). The physical elements of the garden are as such, a direct expression of harmony between form and space. (Nitschke, 2003)

Through studying the form and atmosphere of these gardens, I concluded four ways they could act as catalysts for spiritual experience.

First way is by providing symbolism that stimulates contemplation. Zen gardens can be seen to contain a vast amount of symbolism expressing the spiritual insight of the monks who designed them. However, as enlightenment in Zen context is not an intellectual insight, contemplation does not provide the initial experience of enlightenment, but rather helps in maintaining the sense of harmony followed by it. (Watts, 1965) Contemplation and symbolism also aid in finding ways to express the tacit essence of the true reality behind the symbols.

The second form of spiritual experience is found in understanding and accepting the fleeting quality of all forms. Zen accepts the physical world as ever changing, and appreciates the downward side of the cycle as an inevitable part of the dynamic harmony of the world. (Watts, 1965) Gardens can point towards this realization through their nature as changing forms. This is, of course, highlighted especially by the seasonal changes in plants, for example in Saihō-ji. Understanding the impermanence of forms, is accompanied by experiencing the unchanging essence behind the world of form. Change only
exists in contrast to stillness, and in Zen the two are felt mutually. (Watts, 1965)

This experience is strongly related to the third way of practicing Zen, which is present moment awareness. Being fully present in the world, one accepts and appreciates all forms as they arise and disappear, and at the same time dwells in the stillness behind all forms. (Watts, 1965), (Tolle, 2004) In Zen temple gardens especially the tradition of abstract karesansui provides aid in attaining a state of presence. In this thesis I studied the karesansui of Ryōan-ji, which in its harmonious simplicity offers a great aid in reaching a state of presence. In Ryōan-ji, the mind is free to experience the garden scene as a whole. This allows for consciousness to reach a state of presence, where the world is observed simply as it is, without judgement our clinging.

In a sense, all forms of spiritual insight point towards the same experience of unity with the world. In attaining spiritual awakening, it is irrelevant whether the experience is awakened through insight of the dynamic harmony of change or present moment awareness. In the context of Zen temple gardens All symbols and expressions of spiritual insight point towards the same ultimate realization. This realization is then followed by a sense of presence and belonging, which is sincerely expressed in all Zen practice from zazen to chadō.

The experience of satori is accompanied and followed by a deep sense of harmony (Kapleau, 1989), which is the fourth form of spiritual experience studied in this thesis. Harmony is not a single experience, but rather a state of being that follows the realization of ones unity with the world.

The feeling of harmony is expressed through all Zen practice, including land-
scape design. The more I searched for the elements enabling spiritual experience in Zen temple gardens, the more apparent it became that they would not be found in any individual forms or methods of landscape design. The key in creating landscape art that inspires a deep sense of harmony or even enlightenment, is not in the elements of the gardens themselves, but rather depends on the state of consciousness of the person designing them. A garden, created as an expression of inner, enlightened, harmony expresses this harmony in its composition and atmosphere, thus passing the experience onwards through the Zen principle of pointing to the truth directly.

8. CONCLUSION

Zen gardens are a direct expression of Zen teachings. They are a way in which the spiritual experience was transferred to future generations. As such they are like any form of Zen art, such as haiku, or sumi-e. Multiple haiku can be written with the same structure and principles and yet only few masters have truly been able to express something profound in their poetry. Anyone can paint simple landscapes with black ink and yet all attempts to mimic the mystical harmony of the paintings by Muromachi masters like Sesshu, fall painfully short.  

4 As an example one can compare the painting by Sesshu on page 23 with the cover of this thesis, which is painted by myself.
In the same way, a mere imitation of the elements of Zen temple gardens does not constitute a space that truly inspires a sense of harmony in the way that the famous Muromachi era gardens do. In fact, some quite appalling examples can be found in many contemporary spas and hotels around the world, where the attempt to mimic the elements of Zen gardens objectively results in spaces that appear very artificial and out of place.

The means of expressing Zen are deceivingly simple, and that is exactly where lies their difficulty. Zen gardens are at the same time natural and not natural. Their secret lies in the harmonious way of working as one with the nature, that the Muromachi era monks expressed trough all of their art. The deep sense of balanced harmony in the arrangement of these gardens could not have been created, and cant be imitated by any systematic approach to arranging stones or building gardens in general.

Through my adequate understanding of Zen, I would argue that generally the gardens were not built with an aim of expressing a specific teaching. Instead they are expressions of the Zen mystics enlightened way of being. Gardening was a form of Zen practice (Kuck, 1982), and as I have concluded, Zen practice is not a means to an end, but an expression of inert Buddhahood in itself. In this way all activity can be practice of Zen, and yet is so only when sincere. (Watts, 1965)

The gardens were not designed intellectually, but intuitively, in harmony with the world (Nitschke, 2003). This way of working relates to the concept in contemporary psychology called flow, and is present in creating all forms of truly iconic art. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992) The importance of intuition and flow in creating landscape...
design is a subject that requires further study.

In contemporary landscape architecture the use of systematic approaches, as well as the amount of restrictions and economical realities causes most designs to be created intellectually, as solutions to a problem, as well as to be dictated by superimposed parameters. This approach results in landscape architecture, that fulfils its assigned purpose like answering to an ecological problem, but lacks in depth of experience.

Even art that is created intellectually awakens an intellectual response. The quality of this response is determined by the cultural and personal background of the person interpreting it. A well known example would be Marcel Duchamps Fountain, (1917) which can be interpreted as a provocative statement criticizing the hypocrisy of early 20th century western art. However, for people not aware of the intellectual and cultural context of the work, Fountain will always be just a signed urinal.

On the other hand, art that expresses a deeper, aspect of humanity and most importantly, arises from the intuition, can awaken a response on a deeper, intuitive level. Garden art is no exception.

I see that in landscape design, like in any other form of art, the state of consciousness of the artist is one way or another, conveyed in the work. Thus in order to create spiritually inspiring spaces, one needs to subjectively attain the spiritual experience they aim to convey.

In order to create spaces that speak to people on a deeper level, it is important to balance the advanced intellectual understanding of landscape design with a more humane and intuitive approach to
outdoor spaces. Landscape architects create spaces for human beings, and in order to create spaces that affect people on a deeper level, one needs to find the deep essence of humanity within oneself. Spaces created like this transcend the boundaries of cultural context, making them, in principle, inclusive forms of landscape design.

According to Zen teachings, regardless of cultural and personal background, all people are in essence one with the same universal stillness. (Watts, 1965) Through finding this essence in themselves and expressing it through their work, Muromachi era Zen monks were able to create landscape design that still, more than five centuries later, inspires a sense of harmony in visitors from all around the world.

Learning to reach the same state of inner harmony, and expressing it with the aid of modern technology and knowledge, would most likely result in some of the most marvellous works of contemporary landscape design.


Tässä mielessä zen poikkeaa suuresti monista maailman muista henkisistä perinteistä, joissa ”oikea” oppi on annettu
ulkoa käsin. Subjektiivisuuden korostaminen mahdollistaa zen filosofian soveltamisen moniin eri elämäntapoihin, ja tekee siitä helposti lähestyttävän. Ajatuksenani oli, että ymmärrystä henkisen kokemuksen ja puutarhataiteen yhteydestä zen-buddhalaisessa kontekstissa olisi mahdollista soveltaa yleisemmin maisema-arkkitehtuurissa.


Oma hypoteesini on, että yksi syy japanilaisten temppelipuutarhojen erityisluonteeseen löytyy niiden luomisen taustalla ollut henkisistä intentioista. Zen temppelipuutarhat luotiin ennen kaikkea ilmiaisemaan henkistä kokemusta, ja tuominaan uusien henkisten kokemusten saavuttamista. (Kuck, 1982)

Työssäni tutkin henkisen kokemuksen ja zen temppelipuutarhojen välistä yhteyttä kahdesta pääasiallisesta näkökulmasta. Ensimmäinen on puutarhataiteen käyttö henkisen kokemuksen ja opin ilmakuksena, ja toinen henkisen kokemuksen mahdollistuminen temppelipuutarhojen kautta. Tarkemman tutkimuksen kohtena olivat Saihō-jin ja Ryōan-jin puutarhat Kiotossa.
Saihō-jissa pääasiallisia henkisen koke- 
muksen ilmauksia on muutoksen ja ikui-
suuden välisen dynaamisen harmonian 
väittymisen puutarhan ilmaiirissä. Fyy-
sisä tämän ilmaiirin luomisessa 
ovat puutarhan ikiaikista tunnelmaa

luovat kivi ja sammalmuodostelmat, sekä
vuo
denaikojen vaihtelua korostavat kas-
vivalinnat. (Kuck, 1982)

Ryōan-jin kuiva karesansui puutarha on
olemuksestaan hienovaraisempi, ja vai-
keammin sanallistettava. Puutarhan ole-
musta ei ole tarkoitettu mietiskeltävän
ällyllisesti symbolin kautta, vaan koet-
tavan suoraan kaikessa sellaisuudessa-

apa. (Kuck, 1982) Tämä ajatus liittyy

een filosofian suoran osoittamisen peri-
aatteeseen. Henkistä heräämistä ei voi

saavuttaa ajattelemalla, sillä henkinen

herääminen mahdollistuu nimen omaan

suoran ja sanattoman kokemisen kautta.

(Watts, 1965)

Tutkimalla zen filosofian ja harjoituksen

elementtejä Saihō-jissa ja Ryōan-jissa

löysin neljä tapaa, joilla nämä puutarhat

mahdollistavat henkisen heräämisen ja

cokemuksen.

Ensimmäinen tapa henkisen kokemuk-

sen mahdollistamisessa on mietiskelyn

tukeminen symbolin avulla. Zen temp-
pelipuutarhoissa voi nähdä paljon zen

filosofian periaatteisiin viittavia symbolei-
ta, jotka saattavat avittaa henkisessä

oivalluksessa. (Nitschke, 2003) Koska

henkinen herääminen ei kuitenkaan ole

ällyllinen oivallus, symbolien mietiskely ei

lähtökohtaisesti mahdollista valaistumis-
ta sinäänsä. Sen sijaan symbolit toimivat

muistutuksina ja viitteinä, jotka avittavat

valaistumista seuraavan harmonian yllä-
pitämisessä. (Watts, 1965)

Toinen henkisen kokemuksen muoto löy-
tyx kaikkien muotojen katoavaisuuden

oivaltamisesta ja hyväksymisestä. Zen
filosofiassa muotojen maailma nähdään olevan jatkuvassa muutoksessa, ja tuo-
ta muutosta arvostetaan maailmankaik-
keuden dynaamisen harmonian osana.
(Watts, 1965) Puutarhoissa tämä muu-
tos näkyy erityisesti puutarhakeelementtien
vuodenaisisissa muutoksissa. Muotojen
katoavaisuuden ymmärtäminen vapaut-
taa ihmisen kärsimyksestä, joka syntyy
pyrkimyksistä takertua niihin. Samalla ih-
minen kokee muotojen taustalla pysyvän
tyyneyden.

Tyyneyes liittyy vahvasti läsnäoloon, joka
on kolmas henkinen kokemus ja harjoit,
tus, jonka tempelipuutarhat mahdollis-
tavat. Täydellinen läsnäolo vallitsevassa
hetkessä vapauttaa ihmisen mielen pyr-
kimyksistä tulkita ja tuomita kaikkea ta-
pahtuvaa synnyttäen syvän harmonian

tunteen. (Tolle, 2004) Zen tempelipuu-
tarhoista erityisesti abstraktit karesan-
sui puutarhat edesauttavat läsnäolon
tilan saavuttamisessa. Yksinkertaisissa
puutarhoissa mieli voi kokea tilan ilman
tulkintaa, mikä mahdollistaa läsnäole-
van tietoisuuden heräämisen. (Nitschke,
2003)

Tietystä mielessä kaikki henkisen koke-
muksen tavan zen tempelipuutarhois-
sa osoittavat kohti samaa valaistunutta
kokemusta, jossa tietoisuus kokee yh-
teyden maailman kanssa. Tapa jolla ko-
kemus saavutetaan on epäolennainen.
Tärkeää zenin harjoittamisen kannalta
onkin sen sijaan valaistumis kokemuk-
sen jälkeinen harmonia, ja sen ilmentä-
minen jokapäiväisessä elämässä. Har-
monia on neljäs ja viimeinen henkisen
kokemuksen muoto, jota käsittelin tässä
kandidaatityössä.

Harmonia ei niinkään ole yksittäinen ko-
kemus, vaan pitempiäikainen olotila, joka
seuraa henkistä heräämistä. Tätä har-
monian tilaa ilmennetään kaikessa zen
harjoituksessa ja ilmaisuissa mukaan lukien puutarhahattiteessa.

Mitä enemmän tutkin japanilaisia zen temppelipuutarhoja, henkisen kokemuksen ilmauksina, sitä selvemmin minulle ilmeni, ettei henkisen kokemuksen mahdollistavia elementtejä voi löytää yksin puutarhojen fyysisistä elementeisistä. Vaikka on mahdollista yleistää tiettyjä henkistä kokemusta edesauttavia periaatteita, mitkään yksittäiset puutarhahelmentit tai rakennusperiaatteet eivät riitä luomaan zen puutarhojen kaltaisia mestariteoksia. Sen sijaan tutkimuksessani korostui, puutarhojen olemus henkisen tilan ilmauksena.

Tärkeintä henkisen kokemuksen mahdollistamisessa zen temppelipuutarhoissa vaikuttaa olevan puutarhien suunnittelijoiden henkinen tila. Kuten kaikki zen taide, myös puutarhat ovat ilmauksia zen munkin sisäisestä harmoniasta. Tämä harmonia välittyy luonnollisella ja tavalla munkin luomaan taiteeseen, kuten tässä tapauksessa, puutarhaan.

Voidakseen luoda mestarillisia henkisen kokemuksen ilmauksia suunnittelijan on saavutettava subjektiivisesti se tila, jonka haluua suunnitelmassaan mahdollistaa. Tällä tavoin henkinen tai emotionaalin kokemus välittyy intuitiivisesti suunnittelumaan, ja koskettaa käyttäjää syvemmällä intuitiivisella tai jopa henkisellä tasolla.

Maisema-arkkitehtuuri voi parhaillaan olla kuin mikä tahansa koskettava ja puhtaleleva taidemuoto. Toisaalta mahdollisuudet syvien kokemusten välittymiseen ovat maisema-arkkitehtuurissa erityisen hyvät, suunniteltavien tilojen moniaisti-suuden ja kokonaisvaltaisuuden vuoksi. Intuition rooli arkkitehtuurissa ja maisema-arkkitehtuurissa on aihe, joka kaipaa lisätutkimusta, sillä intuition hyödyntäminen mahdollistaa syvempien emotionaa-
listen tai jopa henkisten kokemusten väliittymisen tilakokemuksessa.

REFERENCES

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Image 1: A sumi-e by Sesshū Tōyō
https://i2.read01.com/uploads/0Ctq8J0C.jpg

Image 2: A detail from Saihō-ji
Julia Donner, Saihō-ji, Kyoto, Japan, 2017

Image 3: A detail from Ryōan-ji
Julia Donner, Ryōan-ji, Kyoto, Japan, 2017