

The Japanese Garden

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For Komaki Kawaguchi

“Whoever told people that ‘Mind’ means
thoughts, opinions, ideas, and concepts?
Mind means trees, fence posts, tiles and grasses.”

Dogen
(Philosopher and founder of the Soto school of Japanese Zen)



Tofuko-in

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Photographs by
Komaki Kawaguchi
and Peter Stickland

Starting to break free

Reticent and edgy, Natsu
sits gazing at the garden,
avoiding the glaring sun.

Transfixed and enchanted,
she nurses vague sensations in
these benevolent shadows.

She tussles with hazy dreams,
profound notions that need
to be brought into the light.

How does a grain of sand
leave its boulder and introduce
itself to a waiting oyster?

What kind of pearl can she
become if she remains nervous
and shy, waiting to start?



Previous page; Entsu-ji
Opposite page; Entsu-ji



Intention and resolve

The gardener interrupts her.
All those who gaze upon this
garden know nothing until
they have become its designer.

Do not imagine that stillness or
tranquillity were this man's ambition.
You must feel the weight of
his decisions and responsibility.

Do not declare peace until you
have joined his battle for intention
and resolve and know completely
how a lack of intention is intention.

He adds and subtracts, places a thing
here or there, like this or like that and
decides on gravel or moss, stone or tree.
His garden will last a thousand years.

Bemoan the fate of those who visit
quickly, pay a yen or two for good
luck and talk of peaceful meditation.
Accept your responsibility and work.



Previous page; Rayun-in
Opposite page; Rayun-in



Surrender (After Jalal Uddin Rumi)

Very little grows on jagged rock,
said the friendly gardener.

Don't pretend to know what
you haven't experienced.

Words will not help; there's no
getting ready other than Grace.

Be ground, be crumbled, let wild
flowers come up where you are.

You've been stony too many years.
Try something different, surrender.



Previous page; Zuiho-in

Opposite page; Zuiho-in



The gardener

The man who worked this land
was subtle; like a dancer.

He was mysterious, like a magician;
profound, like a poet;
responsive like a mother.

The man who worked this land
was watchful, like a man crossing a winter stream.
He was alert, like a man aware of danger;
courteous, like a visiting guest;
yielding, like ice about to melt;

The man who worked this land
was simple, like a block of un-carved wood.
He was hollow, like a cave;
opaque like a muddy pool.
All this to build a simple garden.



Previous page; Shisen-do

Opposite page; Shisen-do



Air and sunlight

Until this moment Natsu was
mostly frustrated and bored;
longing for more air and light;

She imagined herself covered in
a fine dust; about to explode
in a fit of peppery sneezes.

The gardener invites her to make
a place of nature, something
born of struggle, not of thinking,

His blessing doesn't live in her
head, it climbs up inside her,
from the soles of her willing feet.

You must know this yearning for
spontaneous creation in your bones;
the usual skills will not help you.



Previous page; Sanzen-in
Opposite page; Sanzen-in



Only one

Do anything you fancy,
it takes only one idea
and then you have started.

At the beginning you must
work with speed, without
thought or ambition.

You will quickly create
a mountain of rubbish
that pleads to be edited.

Everything that follows
the beginning is slow.....
the end is very slow.



Previous page; Jisso-in

Opposite page; Jisso-in



As if they'd been forgotten

If you want a marine landscape
far from the sea,
create the seashore.

Position the islands boldly,
making mountains
of differing heights.

Don't forget reefs and peninsulas.
Plant trees but first settle
the beaches and stones.

Rough and untidy arrangements
evoke the crashing of waves
on the fore shore.

Standing stones and lying
stones have a top, a bottom,
a front and a back.

The water is powerful;
the mountain is weak.
use many stones, large and small, but...

arrange them as if they'd been forgotten.



Previous page; Diasen-in
Opposite page; Diasen-in



石の上に
あかり
下
い

Open-hearted

If you invent an idea for your
garden and a wild sense of
freedom takes over, beware.

If, by opening your arms to the
concept you want to let out a shout
for all the world to hear, beware.

There is every chance that
nothing will happen; the notion
will simply refuse to materialize.

Don't worry, keep quiet, become
empty, still and open; the distracting
idea you had will soon float away.

Only when you are openhearted
can you get busy with your hands and
feel what the garden wants to become.

A concept easily dies.
Attend to your seeds lovingly.



Previous page; Hojo
Opposite page; Hojo



An affinity with the heart

The beginning is dangerous.
Get tough, trust chaos,
have problems as your allies.

Start with what's provocative,
fishy and risky. Practice discovery.
Become good at marvellous accidents.

Use chance to banish old connections.
What you know causes drowsiness.
Attract new thresholds and recognitions.

Be generous; avoid preconceptions.
Evict understanding; trust your spirit.
Forget any desire for recognition.

Dreams arise in discrete places,
Narratives unfold in detached places.

Make decisions with your eyes closed.
Confirm it only if it strikes the eye.



Previous page; Manshu-in
Opposite page; Manshu-in



A breath of fresh air

If you must draw to assist a
garden coming into the world,
don't let ideas tread on it.

Jettison concepts;
its evolution that counts.
Let growth change you.

Expect nothing,
accept hazards,
anticipate mysteries.

Listen to the lines;
it's the pen that
does the dreaming.

Get out of the way,
make yourself available,
let the paper carry the spirit.

Hope resides where
these virtues thrive.
Take a breath of fresh air

and then draw.



Previous page; Honpo-ji
Opposite page; Honpo-ji



Curves and stones

Start with a dream,
 follow your heart and
 invite poetic feelings.
Design something by listening
 and have what comes
 to you by accident.
Associations take place
 when rupture occurs,
 that's the place of reassembly.
Make a lake with islands
 and a river that changes direction
 when it hits the stones.
One stone must dominate,
 but all must be strong
 and withstand the current.
The reduction in the force
 of the current is reflected
 in the river's shape.
With the water flowing east to west,
 place the main stones
 where the river curves.
These curves are the dragon's stomach,
 but the stones must be arranged as if
 they had been overlooked.



Previous page; Ryogen-in
Opposite page; Ryogen-in



Nursing fantasy

If there is an enormous
canyon between your dreams
and where you want to be,
if you've no idea how to
construct a bridge to cross it,
try nursing fantasy.

Contrive your destiny,
become an inventor
of remarkable gardens,
astounding spaces and
spectacular installations.
These things change lives.

Become a conjuror,
play tricks, create illusions.
explore magnificent vistas
and seduce visitors to enter.
Make a world where places
neither begin nor end.

Imagine sitting quietly,
gazing at your garden,
shedding a tear or two.



Previous page; Ginkaku-ji
Opposite page; Ginkaku-ji



銀閣寺形手水鉢

Let this garden teach you

Let this garden teach you that every
decision in the world is possible.

Every decision; every choice of
stone, shrine, stream, slit, shingle,
sham, sentence, scrap, stump, shrub and step.

Every decision; every bit of
screed, shade, sand, scenery, shard,
surface, sense, sharpness and smoothness.

Every decision; every kind of
size, scale, sign, slice, secret,
swell, shrug, stack, stunt, speed and smell.

Every decision; every type of
sequence, song, stride, sonnet,
sound, shock, side-show and of course season.

It all depends on what you want.
Let this garden teach you the
sheer weight of determination.



Previous page; Funda-in
Opposite page; Funda-in



This is your life

The spring blue after roaring thunder;
the tiny summer clouds, feathery, still;
the red leaves entertaining the wind,
these are all your life.

And in this little garden
the ordered chaos is your life;
the sequences are your life;
the arrangement is your life;
the accidents are your life.

How you invite it in to you each day,
how you chose your place to stay,
how you dream which scale to play,
how you read it and which way today,

these are all your life – every day.



Previous page; Kennin-ji

Opposite page; Kennin-ji



The world's melodies

Forget the old trickery,
the outworn hypocrisy,
become completely naked.

Enjoy the world's melodies.
Let music heat you and
invite your dreams to play;

Listen to the planet breathing
and drinking, know that love
pulls you like a river.

Drink dawn like a
cup of spring water,
take in sunset like supper.



Previous page; Kennin-ji

Opposite page; Kennin-ji



Turning around

Make a garden where visitors
continually turn around to face the space
they've just moved through.

Turning again, they'll anticipate the spaces ahead.
With each look back their progress is halted.
Returning - their world is now a theatre.

The vistas invite reflection on the sequence.
The spaces invite seclusion and privacy.
The events invite memory and narrative.

A wealth of advances and retreats.
A treasure house of visual initiations.
A world of actions and celebrations.



Previous page; Moren-ji
Opposite page; Moren-ji



Telling stories

There's only one thing more important
than an invitation to a place of beauty;
it's an invitation to a place of radical beauty.

Forget vague geographical locations,
create the centre of the world; entertain and
feed your friends on a feast of perplexity.

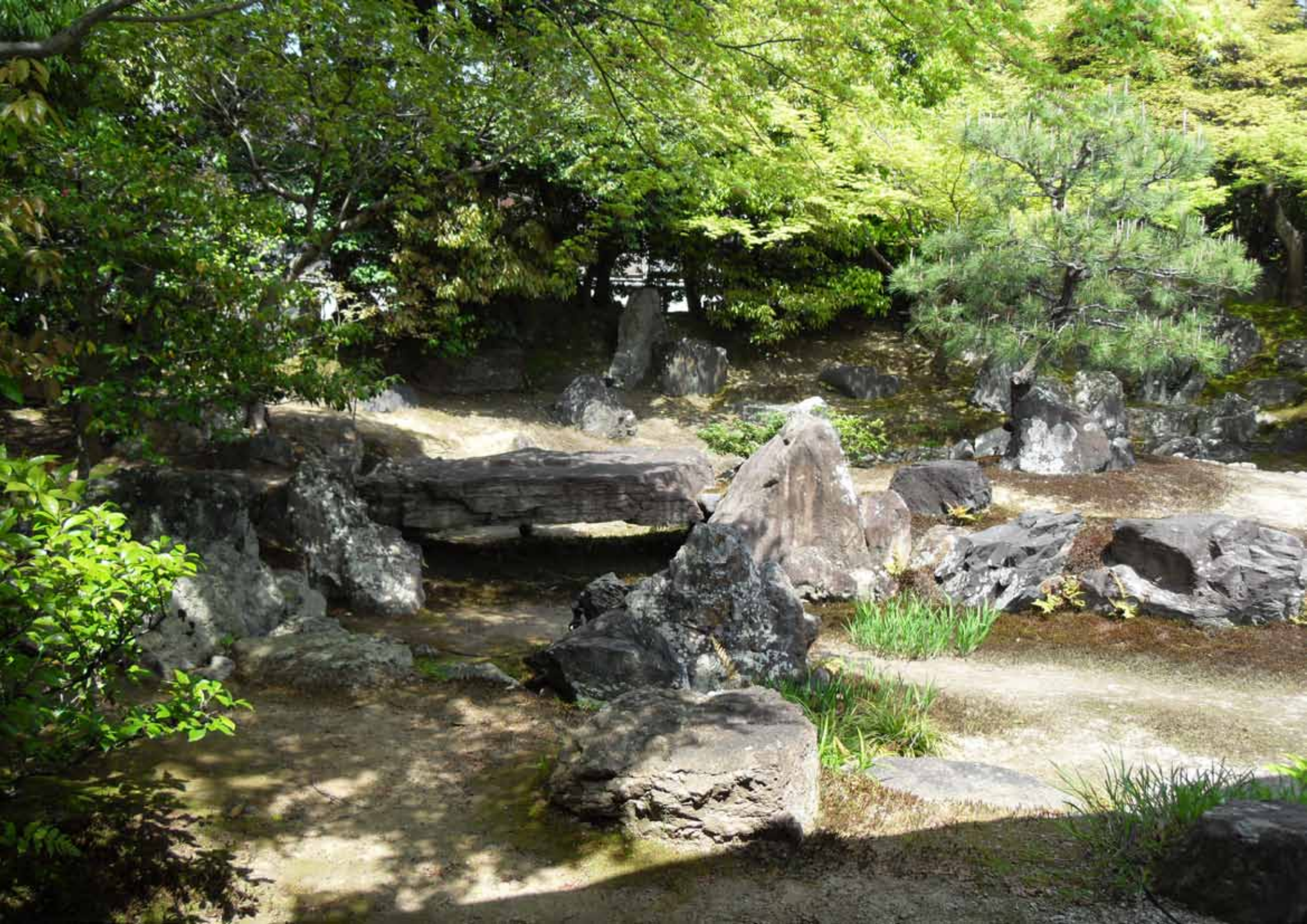
Will we be able to listen to your garden?
Will its objects tell us fairy stories?
Items properly arranged are narratives.

Trigger the material imagination.
Paths, a wall, a bridge and stones;
imagination resides in these things.

Invent a sequence of spatial tales.
Let them live in the memory like theatre.
Learn anything, but learn how to tell stories.



Previous page; Entoku-in
Opposite page; Entoku-in



All the stones

First you come for beauty
the arrangement of the stones
and you come to see what's risky;
the hazardous decisions that can startle.

And you come for the excitement
of sitting alone in contemplation,
the precious chance to meditate
upon nature, the objects and yourself.

But when you see a garden made
only of fine granite chips, carefully
raked in patterns and granite cones,
you feel the horror of disappointment.

Cheated of a promised drama,
your mind cannot make up its mind,
expectation demands you reject this place,
so you miss your best possible lesson.

All the stones you could ever want
are in the next garden, so why not
learn to love the preciousness this
one offers and forget your expectation.



Previous page; Diasen-in

Opposite page; Diasen-in



The rhetorical landscape

Only draw the context and orientation
with the melodies from your dreams.

Allow the functional and social invitations
to align themselves to accents and rhythms.

Explore forms and the qualities of space
in the same way as you join words to a tune.

Invent notations and explore materials
while singing well known songs very loudly.

Illustrate the options of your colours
with gentle melodrama and artfulness.

Create diagrams for the play of light
while inhaling the scent of theatre.

Sensationalize a narrative sequence
with the intricacy of dramatic artifice.



Previous page; Unryu-in
Opposite page; Unryu-in



Dancing and naming

Imagine your beautiful garden
and then imagine you are
dancing elegantly and lithely
over every inch of the ground,
its rocks and its vegetation.

This kind of garden design is
performance - it's the movement
and placement of the body
that directs the composition,
and you have to dream it.

By dancing it you feel every
nook and cranny in your body;
you're intimately connected to
the minute profiles of topography.
Now name each of the little places.

Only when you have named
the events in your garden
can you talk of it as a friend.
These names will be the
characters in your story.



Previous page; Entoku-in
Opposite page; Rayun-in



Haven of inner strength

Your haven of inner strength
is an oasis that drifts
like the waves of the sea.
High winds did not last all morning,
they came briefly together
to feel the gentle rain.
Let your thoughts rise up naturally,
like osmosis; they were carried
like pollen on the breeze.
If ideas are contracted by the
sneezing of others you will
never know how – who cares.
Collect ideas as you collect
burrs on your socks
when walking over a field.
You just have to stop now
and then to see what
you have gathered up.
If you would like to start,
know that all gardeners
thrive on intense attention.



Previous page; Koto-in
Opposite page; Koto-in



