

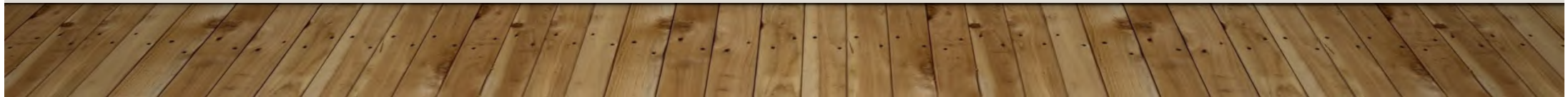
SINGAPUR

LOUK PECHTOLD

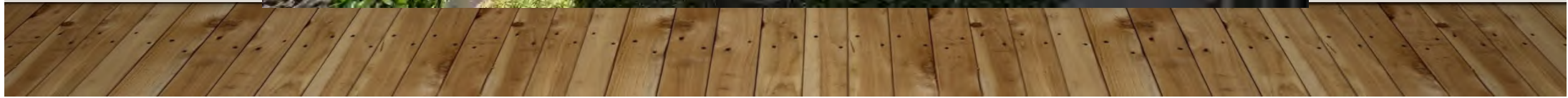
LIEBE GRÜSSE AUS SINGAPUR

ICH HABE DEN DORTIGEN BONSAIGARTEN BESUCHT; BEGRENZTE

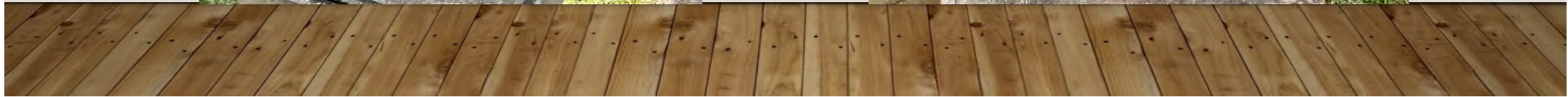
ANZAHL AN BONSAIS AUFGRUND DER SEHR HOHEN LUFTFEUCHTIGKEIT

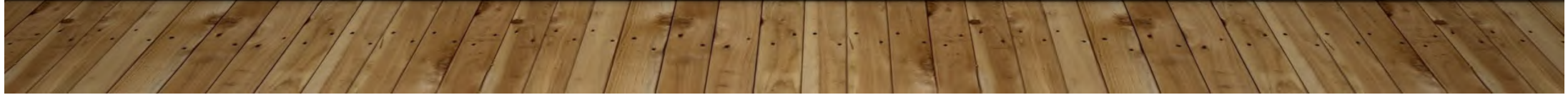












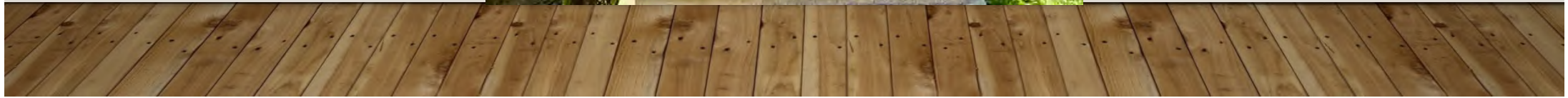


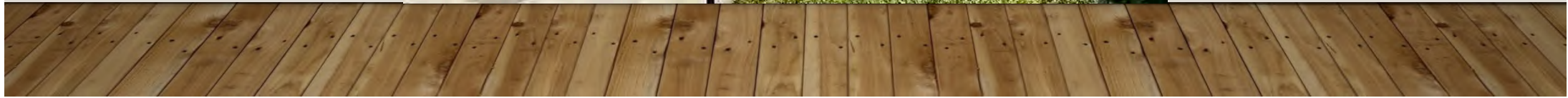


Species: Buddhist Pine (*Podocarpus macrophyllus*)
Style: Informal Upright

Introduction: This slanting-trunk penjing showcases a right-leaning trunk with a subtle curve, contrasting sharply with the foliage sloping left. This opposing arrangement creates a balanced yet dynamic composition, emulating the refined elegance of ancient trees in the wild.

The bonsai displayed is a replica due to the non-suitable growing conditions of this environment for real bonsais.





History in a Pot

Penjing (盆景) or bonsai, also known as *penzai* (盆栽), originates from China, and is a living artistic representation of the natural world. Literally meaning 'tray/pot scenery', *penjings* are miniature renditions of natural landscapes, created using carefully pruned plant, different types of rocks, soil and other materials.

More than a potted plant, the cultivation of *penjing* is a meditative process that conveys the context as well as the artistic and philosophical influences of the time. Constantly evolving, *penjing* remains an enduring and timeless art form that embodies a profound appreciation for the beauty of nature.

The Chinese introduced this art form to Japan during the late Heian Period (794 - 1192) and since then, *penjing* has reached a worldwide audience, including Singapore.

Cultural Influences and Evolution

Following social unrest and disunity throughout the Wei and Jin dynasties, the Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist concepts of morality being rooted in a natural order grew increasingly popular as people sought to restore social order. Appreciation of natural landscapes became the mark of a refined person, and practicing *penjing* was one of the ways to do so.

Today, amid our fast-paced lifestyle, *penjing* has resurfaced globally for people seeking tranquility and self-reflection, demonstrating humanity's innate desire to connect with nature.



Left
Photo credit: Jukkbrother, licensed under CC by 4.0

Right
Photo credit: Anandajoti Bhikku, licensed under CC by 2.0

Did you know?

The old Chinese Garden, also known as *Yu Hwa Yuan*, was designed by Taiwanese architect *Yuen-chen Yu* in reminiscence of the imperial Suzhou architecture style. The Garden had statues of 8 influential heroes, including Confucius.

Ming & Qing Dynasties

1368 - 1644 AD

1644 - 1911 AD

Penjings began to be perceived as living forms of Chinese landscape paintings in the Ming and Qing dynasty. Emphasising on how the aesthetic of the *penjing* engage observers, *penjing* artists started to consider and create various compositional styles, as well as artificially alter trees, rocks and other *penjing* elements. The idea of considering new elements such as containers and shadows casted as part of the *penjing* itself also became popularised.

In the Qing dynasty, *penjing* became even more varied in design and style, and the development of water and land *penjing* came with the production of better containers. Some *penjings* even featured live fish and water features!



Did you know?

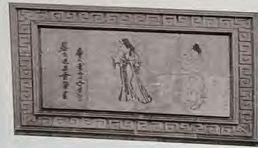
By 1990s, cultivating *penjing* had become a popular pastime for Singaporeans who love the outdoors as a way of connecting with nature while residing in apartments.

Early Tang Dynasty

618 – 907 AD

Penjing flourished as an art form during the Tang dynasty, together with other art forms such as poetry and paintings. Lauded as China's Golden Age, the years of progress and stability during this time saw the popularity and the maturity of landscape penjings as an art form in and out of the royal court.

Enthusiastic discourses through various creative mediums marvelled at the different ways to create *penjing*. The appreciation of *penjing* also exemplified people's love of the natural world, and each *penjing* was an expression of one's relationship with the natural world.



Did you know?

This well-known mural painting, was discovered on the corridor leading to the tomb of Prince Zhuang Huai of the Tang Dynasty who lived from 655 to 684 AD. The replica can be found on a stone carving in the Bonsai Garden.

Han & Jin Dynasties

206 BC – 220 AD

265 – 420 AD

Penjing has been practiced in some variation as early as the Han dynasty, around 206 BC. Though not fully established as an art form even during the Jin dynasty in 420 AD, landscape miniatures like *penjing* were created in the dedicated study and meditation on humanity's relationship with nature.

The earliest record of a *penjing* was found in the fresco in the entrance hall of an Eastern Han Tomb, which was excavated at Wangdu in the Hebei province. The age of the tomb suggests the art form was practiced since as early as the Eastern Han dynasty, which was established over 2000 years ago.



Bonsai expert Boh Chit Heen with one of his bonsai exhibits. 4 February 1977.
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Did you know?

Enthusiasm in *penjing* has been known to exist in Singapore since the 1950s, and *penjing* gardeners were greatly influenced by the ancient Chinese art form from books.