

Zeitschrift: Pamphlet
Herausgeber: Professur für Landschaftsarchitektur, Christophe Girot, ETH Zürich
Band: - (2023)
Heft: 27: Terrain vogue

Artikel: Kyoto garden dialogues
Autor: Vollmer, Matthias / Häusler, Dennis
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-1044308>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

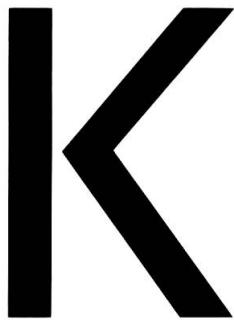
L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 06.02.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>



KYOTO

KYOTO GARDEN DIALOGUES

Matthias Vollmer, Dennis Häusler

Curiosity, the desire to experience something new, moves people to relentlessly explore and experiment. In 2014 the Chair of Landscape Architecture of Christophe Girot at ETH Zurich traveled to Japan on a study trip. While in Kyoto, our group marveled at the countless and incredibly beautiful gardens, most likely without understanding exactly what we were looking at. As visitors from another part of the world it was impossible for us to fully grasp the nuances, the contrasts, and the depth of these incredible garden designs.

When language as a means of communication has reached its limits in discussions about gardens, architecture, and space, the shift to another

medium such as a sketch, an image, or a model can help to communicate ideas and thoughts. A series of on-site workshops in the following years paved the way step by step for an alternative understanding. We used laser scanners and microphones to map and model the spatial composition and to record the acoustic dimension of these intangible gardens. Seeing the four-hundred-year-old garden of Shisen-dō in Kyoto as a point cloud model was foreign yet familiar. This experience became the starting point of years of knowledge exchange between ETH Zurich and the Design Lab at the Kyoto Institute of Technology (KIT).

With point cloud modeling, we found a communication tool that was intuitively understood by workshop participants from both Zurich and Kyoto. The immediate legibility of a point cloud model stems from the high level of detail and the associated recognizability of objects, artifacts, and features. It facilitates access and enables discussion around space, architecture, and landscape where linguistic translation or the paraphrasing of terms creates more difficulties than it solves. Over the duration of the exchange between KIT and ETH Zurich, a differentiated discussion based on point cloud models has revealed the differences and similarities of spatial concepts regarding the two cultures and created the basis for a deeper understanding both of the perception and conception of space and of its cultural connotations.

Japanese and Swiss students collaborated to develop short point



Section through Shisen-dō, Kyoto

cloud animations with sound compositions from Japanese gardens as a method for exploring space. The animations gave the students a form of expression in which language does not play the primary role and which allows them to bypass familiar and distracting patterns of spatial representation. Point cloud representation allows a shift from the culturally shaped perspectives and their historical connotations. Views and paths that are impossible for human perception on site provide a structure in which new, unfamiliar concepts can be implemented. The transparency of the model creates ambiguities

that appear and disappear during an animation. They introduce another contribution to the spatiotemporal experience. The ephemeral quality of the representation, the transparency of the spatial separation, the connection with neighboring spaces—of the context and the landscape—evoke analogies to Japanese architecture and to historical representations of Japanese landscapes.¹ Seeing things from another perspective enables us to see the new and unfamiliar—like the flight of a dragonfly through the garden of Dainei-ken—and in the best sense to never fully understand it.



Pond in Dainei-ken, Kyoto

► Follow this link to experience a Kyoto Garden as point cloud.²
<https://youtu.be/70AYQfDNjUM>

This article is related to the Pamphlet “Sampling Kyoto Gardens,” published in 2017, which allows an in-depth look at the perception of Japanese garden culture.

1 See, for example, the left panel of Tōhaku Hasegawa’s Pine Trees Screen or Katsushika Hokusai’s Fuji from Inume Pass.

2 Arata Kinukawa and Ken Kishimoto, “Hydro Garden,” point clouds recorded in Kyoto, 2017, MOV video, 02:53, ETH Zurich and Kyoto Institute of Technology, <https://doi.10.3929/ethz-b-000600281>.