

PRESS RELEASE

SHAPESHIFTERS: THE ALCHEMY OF BONSAI AND DESIGN



"Objects from the Pacific Bonsai Museum's collection that artists were invited to respond to: (from left) Sierra Juniper (in training since 1957), Formosan Juniper (in training since 1960), Abstract Suiseki-Viewing Stone, Staghorn Sumac (in training since 1986)."

AUGUST 6, 2019, SEATTLE – Totokaelo, Pacific Bonsai Museum, and GRAY are pleased to announce a collaborative project launching during this year's Seattle Design Festival. Installed at Totokaelo's Seattle store, they will present "Shapeshifters: The Alchemy of Bonsai and Design", an exhibition curated by Aarin Packard, Curator of Washington's Pacific Bonsai Museum. The exhibition will be on view for the duration of the Seattle Design Festival (August 16–25, 2019) and is free and open to the public.

The exhibition invited four artists — John Hogan (Seattle, WA), Diane Rudge (Vancouver, BC), Vince Skelly (Portland, OR), and Julian Watts (Monroe, OR) — to respond in their own medium to works from the Pacific Bonsai Museum's permanent collection. Hogan's glass vessels are paired with a 150-year-old Sierra Juniper in training as a bonsai since 1957; Rudge's hanging macramé is paired with a 60-year-old Formosan Juniper; Skelly's wooden bench is paired with an abstract black nephrite jade viewing stone; and Watts' large wooden sculpture is paired with a meandering, 40-year-old Sumac.

Each artist's response creates a display that is also a dialogue — between the bonsai and object, and between the pairing and the viewer — asking the viewer to investigate each pairing's visual interplay, similarities and dissimilarities, and (possibly) shared agendas, from which to draw their own conclusions and explore their own dialogue with nature. In turn, "Shapeshifters" explores the balance between nature, design, tradition, and modernity, in an exhibition that marks an alchemical moment and forges a new expression of bonsai art.

"The approach that Totokaelo takes towards curating and presenting well-designed objects aligns very well with how Pacific Bonsai Museum presents the art of bonsai," Packard says. "Both are focused on encouraging people to appreciate the details, and the thought and time that goes into creating very special, cherished objects."

"Totokaelo is born of Seattle and deeply rooted in its artistic and creative community. It is our great pleasure to be involved with and supportive of the Seattle Design Festival, especially in tandem with local powerhouses like GRAY, Pacific Bonsai Museum, and the four artists included in our collaborative installation," says Totokaelo's VP of Brand and Marketing, Fanny Damiette. "Presenting established and emerging talent side by side has been a key facet of the Totokaelo brand from its inception; to continue this tradition through art and nature supports that mission and brings it to three-dimensional life."

"Designers who work with traditional materials such as glass and wood share similar challenges with what Aarin is trying to do with bonsai: looking for ways to evolve," says Tiffany Jow, editorial director at GRAY. "Watching the

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museum collaborate with the exhibition's artists toward this shared goal has been fascinating, and we look forward to sharing the results with visitors. Totokaelo is a fitting venue for the exhibition, as it, too, celebrates new ideas, approaches, and ways of looking."

"Shapeshifters" will celebrate the project on August 21 at Totokaelo from 6PM to 8PM, where Packard will be in conversation with artist John Hogan about the experience of creating work specifically for this exhibition.

"Shapeshifters: The Alchemy of Bonsai and Design" is generously supported by the Palihotel Seattle, the project's exclusive hotel partner.

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ABOUT PACIFIC BONSAI MUSEUM

Nestled amidst towering conifers, Pacific Bonsai Museum connects people to nature through the living art of bonsai. One of only two museums in the United States solely dedicated to bonsai, and one of only a handful of bonsai museums worldwide, Pacific Bonsai Museum maintains a collection of 150 bonsai that are among the finest examples of bonsai anywhere in the world. The collection is also the most geographically diverse bonsai collection in the United States, with trees from Canada, China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and the United States.

A grand outdoor setting with the elegance of a fine art museum, Pacific Bonsai Museum features sixty trees on exhibit at a given time, open to the public six days a week. This cultural gem offers contemporary and traditional bonsai exhibitions, group tours, education program, field trips, and public events.

pacificbonsaimuseum.org

ABOUT TOTOKAELO

Totokaelo is a fashion destination known for its directional approach to clothing, accessories, art, and objects. Rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach, Totokaelo focuses on a tight curation of partners, thus creating a singular in-depth experience.

totokaelo.com

ABOUT GRAY

GRAY explores the global design landscape through compelling and authoritative content around architecture, interiors, art, design, and culture. Founded in 2011 and based in Seattle, Washington, GRAY is a privately-held, independently-owned media company. It is uniquely positioned to offer a different take on the industry from its vantage point in the Pacific Northwest—an extraordinary locale that is both a hotbed of innovation and an enduring proponent of the arts and crafts movement. Our award-winning, perceptive storytelling focuses on process, craftsmanship, and ingenuity, and serves to inform and engage readers about the international design landscape and contextualize its influence on contemporary culture.

graymag.com

ABOUT THE SEATTLE DESIGN FESTIVAL

The Seattle Design Festival is a program of Design in Public, a multidisciplinary nonprofit organization that promotes the role of design in improving our city. Design in Public is a strategic initiative of AIA Seattle, a chapter of the American Institute of Architects, founded in 2011 to unleash the design thinker in everyone to illuminate Seattle's challenges and ignite action.

designinpublic.org

