



Fine Bonsai: Art & Nature

William N. Valavanis

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In *Fine Bonsai: Art and Nature*, the most notable bonsai trees in the world are seen through the lens of renowned botanical photographer Jonathan Singer. This magnificent volume is the result of an extensive photographic campaign, in the course of which Singer was granted unprecedented access to the most respected public and private collections in Japan and the United States, including the Omiya Bonsai Village of Saitama, Japan, called the "mecca of bonsai," where photography is normally prohibited. Three hundred stunning full-page images and four lavish gatefolds present bonsai of all types, from quiet representations of nature to bold sculptural forms. The horticultural and aesthetic characteristics of each bonsai are concisely and authoritatively described in the narrative captions by William Valavanis, head of the International Bonsai Arboretum in Rochester, New York. And because the container is considered an integral part of any bonsai—indeed, the literal meaning of “bonsai” is “tray plant”—the book also includes some twenty-five photographs of traditional bonsai containers, with descriptions. A further sequence of twenty-five photographs is devoted to the related art of suiseki, or miniature stone landscapes displayed in the same manner, and often alongside, bonsai.

With his groundbreaking first book, *Botanica Magnifica*, Jonathan Singer established a new style of botanical photography, characterized by an exceptional clarity of detail and richness of color, as well as a painterly chiaroscuro. These qualities are just as evident in the present volume; Singer photographs each bonsai with an artist's — one might even say a portraitist's — eye. Whereas most books on bonsai aim to instruct readers on techniques of care and cultivation, Singer's book takes the reader on a visual journey. His images encompass many different species, from azalea to red maple, as well as a variety of blossoms and fruits. Alluring and serene, Singer's photographs make the experience of leafing through *Bonsai* not unlike entering a real Japanese garden. *Fine Bonsai* not only documents the masterpieces of an ancient horticultural art, but is a masterpiece in itself.

A portion of the proceeds of this book will benefit the Japanese Red Cross.

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