DENVER art MUSEUM

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DENVERARTMUSEUM.ORG

Bonseki: The Traditional Japanese Art of Sand Painting

Ruby Red Workshop
Saturday, 10:30 am – 2:30 pm
February 6, 2027
Educator: Sara Linden, bonseki.furusato@gmail.com

CLASS DESCRIPTION

This 1-day workshop will introduce participants to the meditative practice of arranging white sand, stones, and small tools on black lacquer trays to create ephemeral miniature landscapes. Rooted in ancient Japanese and Chinese traditions and connected to the appreciation of suiseki (scholar's stones), bonseki embodies themes of ephemerality, seasonal awareness, and poetic reflection. Through guided demonstrations, hands-on practice, and quiet viewing (haiken), students will learn both introductory and intermediate techniques for shaping landscapes such as winter skies, blossoms, and birds in flight. The workshop will incorporate seasonal poetry, a tea and sweets service, and group reflection. In addition, participants will have the rare opportunity to view selections from the instructor's personal antique bonseki collection, including traditional trays and tools, offering a tangible connection to the art form's history and refinement. The class resonates with Japanese aesthetic traditions within the Arts of Asia collections at the Denver Art Museum.

Pricing:

Museum Friend: $125 / Member: $130 / Student: $130 / Non-Member: $140
**Price includes a $60 Studio Fee for all materials provided.*

Refund and Class Cancellation Policy:

The Denver Art Museum adheres to a no-refund, no-exchange policy. If you are unable to attend, please consider your payment as a tax-deductible donation.

If a class or workshop is cancelled by the Denver Art Museum due to inclement weather or teacher illness, a make-up day will be scheduled on a later SATURDAY as the educator's schedule allows.

Accessibility Statement:

To request large print materials, a sign language interpreter, CART or any other accessibility service, please email access@denverartmuseum.org at least ten (10) business days in advance of the program. We will make every effort to provide accommodation for requests made outside of that window of time.

Please see further information about accessibility, parking, and directions to the DAM here: https://www.denverartmuseum.org/en/accessibility

Materials:

All materials will be provided for this workshop and are included in the Studio Fee of $60.

What to Expect:

Students can expect an immersive and reflective studio experience that blends cultural history, poetry, and hands-on artmaking. The workshop will begin with cultural context and a seasonal poem, followed by a tea and sweets service. The instructor will demonstrate techniques and creation of traditional tools using locally available materials and then guide students in the creation of their own seasonal tray compositions.

Artmaking: Students will create one finished bonseki tray in addition to smaller practice exercises.

Reflection: The workshop will close with a haiken (quiet viewing and group reflection) to appreciate all participants' trays.

Collection Viewing: Antique trays, tools, and stones from the instructor's personal collection will be available for close viewing and discussion, offering insight into the continuity of bonseki practice.

Accessibility: No prior experience is required; instruction is designed for beginners as well as those returning for the second session.

Atmosphere: The class is contemplative and unhurried, with time set aside for tea, poetry, and mindful making.

Museum Connection: Students will be encouraged to explore DAM's Arts of Asia collections on their own for further inspiration.

Timeline:

10:30 – 11:00 am | Welcome & Cultural Introduction

- Introduction to bonseki history, development, and connection with suiseki
- Discussion: Ephemerality, quietude, and seasonal sensitivities

11:00 – 11:30 am | Tea & Sweets Service

- Seasonal sweets & tea shared as a moment of grounding
- Introduction to the day's first poem

11:30 am – 12:00 pm | Gallery Viewing & Inspiration

- Visit to Arts of Japan gallery and inspiration gathering

12:00 – 12:30 pm | Tools & Technique: The First Landscape

- Tray, feather, sand, and tool demonstration & techniques
- Tool creation
- Practice techniques

12:30 – 1:45 pm | Guided Bonseki Creation

- Participants compose their own seasonal and poetically inspired winter scene
- Assistance with composition and rhythm

1:45 – 2:15 pm | Haiken (Viewing) & Group Reflection

- Circle walk and quiet viewing of each tray
- Gentle discussion: What did you discover in your landscape?

2:15 – 2:30 pm | Closing & Take-Home Notes

- Handout: History, seasonal poems, tool sources
- Optional group photo of trays

Educator:

Sara Linden is a contemporary bonseki artist and cultural preservationist based in Arvada, CO. Her work showcases the traditional Japanese art of ephemeral sand painting through poetic seasonal compositions. Her practice blends knowledge gained from years of formal study in chadō (tea ceremony), kadō (ikebana), and bonseki, including intensive training in Kyoto. She holds instructor-level certifications in Ikenobo ikebana (Waki Kyōju Sankyū, Instructor 2nd Grade; Junkakan) and Kazarimono foundational chadō ranks (Nyūmon, Naraigoto), reflecting deep engagement with classical Japanese aesthetics and ritual. Her work is regularly exhibited at Boulder's Canyon Gallery and was featured internationally in Kyoto in November 2025. In 2026, she taught public bonseki

workshops at the Denver Art Museum, marking a major milestone in U.S.-based bonseki education.

As the first international practitioner in her bonseki school, she has worked to expand awareness of this rarely seen art form through therapeutic art programs, exhibitions, and global outreach. She also facilitates mindfulness-based art sessions for patients at Denver Health, using bonseki as a meditative, therapeutic modality. Her current focus is on reviving and sharing this quiet art form through community classes, artist residencies, and wellness-integrated exhibitions.

Sara's works reflect a quiet reverence for seasonal change and impermanence, combining historical precision with contemporary aesthetic sensibilities. Her work is rooted in a reverence for resources, time, and tradition, and reflects a quiet dedication to preserving endangered cultural arts while offering viewers an experience of seasonality, impermanence, and beauty. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and a Master of Library Science.

www.bonsekifurusato.com

WORKSHOP SPACE POLICIES

About:

The Ruby Red Workshop is a dedicated space for Creative Classes and adult programs located on the first floor of the DAM's Martin Building. Students can expect a traditional style art workshop with tables and four-legged chairs with backrests. There are a variety of other seating options available. Sinks, soaps, paper towels, and waste receptacles are accessible in the workshop. Restrooms are located in the elevator bay just outside the workshop entrance. Food and beverages are allowed inside the workshop space, please ensure that you do not enter any galleries with these items.

Each class is different and does not follow a strict or set structure, but will generally include instructor presentations and demonstrations, class gallery visits to view artworks in the DAM collections, individual work time supported by class instructor and assistant, and discussion or share-out time of finished works and works-in-progress.

Cleanup:

Please remove all artworks from the classroom at the end of each class. If wet paintings or in-progress artworks need to be stored in the classroom, there is limited storage on drying racks and in the equipment closet. Students must take

home their own materials after each class. Please ensure that art supplies and equipment belonging to the DAM are put back in the appropriate locations. Sponges, paper towels, and cleaning solution are provided in the classroom for cleanup.

Classroom Access:

Students will have access to the classroom only during scheduled class hours. Please contact Mia DeBakker, Creative & Public Engagement Coordinator, if you need to arrange entrance to the Workshop outside of those hours – mdebakker@denverartmuseum.org.

QUESTIONS

Questions about class content, curriculum, materials, etc. can be directed to Mia DeBakker at mdebakker@denverartmuseum.org or Sarah Rockett at srockett@denverartmuseum.org.

For any questions concerning your registration, please reach out to our Sales & Service Team at info@denverartmuseum.org or (720) 913-0130.

Thank you for being part of Creative Classes at the DAM!