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Fifty years ago I arrived home to Tasmania after having lived for a year in Osaka Japan as a Rotary exchange student.

Making the decision to create fifty bonsai artworks to celebrate the 50th anniversary of that extraordinary year has given me the opportunity for a deep reflective and meditative artistic experience.

Drawing each bonsai has been a spiritual experience each one giving me the opportunity to reflect deeply about Japan. Revealing the enigmatic qualities of the bonsai fitted perfectly with my feelings about Japan and my “Japanese-ness”. Bonsai, for me, are about beauty, age, philosophy, time, memory, symbol and metaphor embraced in a small tree.

Most of the works are lithographs but there are also pen drawings.

As a schoolgirl in Japan I loved studying the art of Japanese brush writing. I used to watch my teacher carefully; noting in particular how she held the brush and gently applied the ink to form the beautiful artistic writing. I was thinking of her as I applied the tusche washes to the lithographic stones hoping for that same gentle, flowing quality.

When I created the drawings or printed the lithographs I used layers of collaged Japanese paper and Joss paper to emphasise the idea of time, memory and Japanese screens. The collages were created prior to drawing or printing and without registering the placement. This is a new process for me but seemed to be an appropriate intuitive element. I created the collage element as a non-representational part of the art work hoping that the layering, composition and colour would add an extra nuance and depth to the work.

50 years  
50 bonsais

09.03.23 —  
27.03.23