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2015 KYOTO LECTURES

Wednesday, March 27th, 18:00h

Wybe Kuitert SPEAKER

Cherries of Kyoto Some Hidden History

Lafcadio Hearn, on the very first day he was in Japan in April 1890, saw "a dazzling mist of snowy blossoms clinging like summer cloud-fleece about every branch and twig; and the ground beneath them, and the path before me, is white with the soft, thick, odorous snow of fallen petals...." Hearn was probably under a cloud of *Somei-yoshino* cherries, a most popular garden plant in the Meiji period that was mass-planted in public places like school yards and parks in these days. Unfortunately, such an image of pink clouds is the only thing that most foreigners take home from Japan's cherries. Cherries in Japan have carried symbolic and aesthetic meanings over the centuries, and many varieties, different from *Somei-yoshino* can still be found. In Kyoto cherries in bloom have challenged gardeners and scholars ever since the city was founded, and quite a few still exist as only one or two trees of a rare type. This lecture introduces this precious and vegetal piece of Kyoto pride, just in time to have a look at it in two-three weeks.

Wybe Kuitert is a researcher, lecturer, writer, designer, and academic specialist of landscape, with a focus on landscape architecture and history. He did his studies in the Netherlands (Wageningen University) and Kyoto (Kyoto University, and International Research Center for Japanese Studies). Presently an Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Environmental Studies of the Seoul National University, Korea, he is on research leave at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Kyoto. He has lectured at Kyoto University, Leiden University, Torino University, Université Paris 8, Harvard University at Dumbarton Oaks, Smithsonian Institution, United States Botanic Garden, UNESCO in Nara, Collège International de Philosophie Paris, and many other institutions. He has published several books and papers, attracting the attention of scholars since his critique of the Zen garden in 1988. He looks after the cherry collection of the Keukenhof in the Netherlands. More information can be found at <http://www.wybekuitert.nl/>

This lecture will be held at the Institute for Research in Humanities (IRH), Kyoto University (seminar room, 1st floor).

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