

# SHAHAI

The art of three: *photography; haiku; typography*

**sha** ... from *shashin*, **photo** 写真

**hai** ... from **haiku** 俳句

**Photo + Haiku** ... **shahai** 写俳

You might come across the term "**photo-haiga**"  
but that seems confusing, since in Japanese  
that would mean: **photo-painting-haiku** フォト俳画

**photo haiku** [**shahai**] seems to fit better.

Sometimes **shahai** is also called **haisha** 俳写,  
but that reading is too close to a spelling that means  
you are a dentist!

**ha-isha** 歯医者 (dentist)

We are only going to pull photographs (with haiku)  
not **teeth**!

# Before shahai

There was haiga!

**haiga** means “playful painting” in Japanese  
**GA** 画 means painting or drawing.

## What is haiga?

The art of three making three disciplines one overall integrated artwork:  
**painting/drawing, haikai verse, calligraphy**

It's been practiced since the 17th century in Japan.

**Nonoguchi (Hinaya) Ryuho (1595–1669)**  
is sometimes cited as the originator.

At around 60 years old he began a new practice of painting.  
Though poetry was already commonly placed within images  
centuries earlier.

**Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694)**

He made haiga into a major art.

Most of the classical era of haikai poets would draw or paint along with their haikai verses.

枯朶に烏のとまりけり秋の暮

kare eda ni karasu no tomarikeri aki no kure

kare-eda-ni	5
karasu-no tomari-keri	9
aki-no kure	5

Matsuo Bashō (1689)

Yes, that's right, Matsuo Bashō broke 'the rules'!  
He made his middle section of the haikai verse deliberately longer to emphasise a branch that stood out as different in the tree.

withered branch  
the crow perches  
into autumn

(rough transl. Alan Summers)

**haiga** is perhaps the most unique of all the contributions to world art from Japan; now followed by the photographic art of shahai.

Both bring together one visual image (painting) and one written image (hokku or haiku).







## Classic haiga style with a modern haiku

*hearsay tumbling leaves into a teapot's brew again yesterday*

Alan Summers

**3rd Prize**

First Bulgarian Contemporary (Gendai) Contest (November 2021)



*morning star  
a can of cherry cola  
starts to fizz*



haiku by Alan Summers    artwork by Kuniharu Shimizu

# Back to shahai

Points to Consider about “*the three-in-one art Japanese genre*”

**Shahai is a triple discipline art at its most basic:**

1. photograph
2. haiku (senryu, tanka, kyoka)
3. typeface/font (the haiga counterpart is hand-written calligraphy)

**Each aspect is both complex and simple at the same time:**

Everything stands on its own, and then becomes a bigger joint enterprise when combined.

The photograph also doubles as a verse with which the poem interacts, and both do not need to repeat each other in topic and subject.

Preferably the verse is strong enough, as an individual piece of writing, to be accepted for a journal, or be picked up by an anthology.

Note: *The Haiku Reader anthology* (editor Alan Summers) accepts haiku from shahai.

**Please do not try to repeat, mimic or mirror the photograph itself, it is what it is:**

- We don't necessarily want a logical and linear narrative between photo and haiku
- It can be anti-narrative, which is basically anti-story.
- This is not a Western method! We like obvious connections, but be adventurous!
- See both image and text as almost resisting each other!
- You can go outside of what the photograph itself has captured.
- What was beyond or behind the photograph?
- Even touch on something that happened from earlier or later in the day or a different time frame.
- The photograph has already succeeded, or endeavoured, to capture a scene so now the poem can move away from the photograph to capture something else:

before, during, after: ***even go off-piste!***

The text is meant to deepen the meaning of the photograph, and vice versa not duplicate what is already there.

“...*the words and images say something together that neither of them can say alone.*”

Quote from *A World in a Drop of Water: Eastern Influences in the films of Andrei Tarkovsky*  
by Seán Martin



**Mortimore's Wood** is an ancient woodland over 800 years run by a charity established when Queen Mary granted them a Royal Charter in 1554.

**Mary I (1516–1558)** is also known as **Mary Tudor** or "**Bloody Mary**" and is the very first Queen of England and Ireland.

She is also the only child of **Henry VIII** by his first wife **Catherine of Aragon** to survive to adulthood.



robinsong  
a morning borrows  
from the painting



photo/haiku©Alan Summers

**The European Robin** is often seen as a **Christmas greetings card symbol**. The robin was practising a late Winter series of melodies called *subsong*.

creeping sepia  
the gravity inside  
beech masts



photograph/haiku©Alan Summers

A mute swan on the River Avon, Chippenham, Wiltshire, England UK

***Beech Mast** is the fruit of the beech tree and in the abundant 'Mast' years the trees produce literally millions of small, edible triangular nuts.*

*These nuts are produced in threes in hard scaly husks which eventually split, throwing the nuts to the Forest floor where their brown colouring makes them difficult for human eyes to see.*

*They provide a nutritious and essential food source for many birds and small mammals just before the onset of winter.*

<https://www.newforestshortbread.co.uk/blogs/news/beechnut>

### **Climate change disrupting beech masts**

Publicly released: Tue 11 Feb 2020 at 0300 AEDT | 0500 NZDT

<https://www.scimex.org/newsfeed/climate-change-disrupting-beech-masts>

Enjoy using [ecosia.org](https://www.ecosia.org) a search engine that plants trees if you use it!

### **More about beech masts:**

<https://www.ecosia.org/search?method=index&q=beech%20masts>





book of birdsong  
the compartments  
in my body

Grey Wagtail March 2022©Alan Summers

Grey Wagtail UK

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife-explorer/birds/larks-sparrows-pipits-wagtails-and-dunnock/grey-wagtail>

**Country diary:** The grey wagtail takes me back to my Romany grandfather

Inkpen, Berkshire:

*My grandad taught me so much, not least that seeing 'Polly Dishwash' meant it was a good, clean place to stop.*

Nicola Chester Fri 8 Apr 2022 05.30 BST

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/apr/08/country-diary-the-grey-wagtail-takes-me-back-to-my-romany-grandfather>



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## Commission/Presentation

Royal Photographic Society (30th March 2022)

*"Photographs and Words"* (Alan Summers and Karen Hoy with Stewart Wall)

Please ask before you reproduce any of the artwork, photographs, haiku or text:

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## Publishing credits

hearsay tumbling leaves into a teapot's brew again yesterday

Alan Summers

**3rd Prize**

First Bulgarian Contemporary (Gendai) Contest (November 2021)

morning star  
a can of cherry cola  
starts to fizz

Alan Summers

**Publication credit:** see haiku here, curated by Shimizu Kuniharu (Tokyo July 19, 2012)

**Feature:** THF Per Diem Archive: R. Bröker March 2014, "Blue Riband" (Friday 28/3/14)

mist and dog  
the weather forecast  
for today

Alan Summers

**Publication credit:** best haiga ed. Lavana Kray (May 2022)

<https://ourbesthaiga.blogspot.com/2022/05/alan-summers.html>

robinsong  
a morning borrows  
from the painting

Alan Summers

Publication: Our Best Haiga curated by Lavana Kray (April 2022)

Black & White Haiga/Haisha

<https://ourbesthaiga.blogspot.com/2022/04/alan-summers.html>

creeping sepia  
the gravity inside  
beech masts

Alan Summers

**Publication Credit:**

Blōo Outlier Journal issue 3

the natural history haiku edition (Summer 2022)

ed. Alan Summers

dedicated to Gene Murtha

<https://tinyurl.com/BlooOutlier3>

book of birdsong  
the compartments  
in my body

Alan Summers

**Publication Credit:** Brass Bell - Morning Haiku (November 2015) curated by Zee Zahava

*Call of the Page* runs shahai courses:

<https://www.callofthepage.org/courses/haiga-shahai-courses/shahai-words-in-a-landscape/>

Alan Summers  
founder, ***Call of the Page***  
[www.callofthepage.org](http://www.callofthepage.org)