

### Category 1, Question 1, Influence of visual art forms

I think that one major influence on art forms today in Japan has to do with everything involved in kami. The word kami, which translated to god in English, is very hard to understand and describe. Because it is hard to describe, I believe that people found their other ways of interpreting the meaning of kami through many art styles. Ikebana has its roots in kami and religion. The tea ceremony is also an art form that involves kami. Nature also plays a great role in Japanese aesthetic. Because the four seasons in Japan vary widely they are strongly represented in such art forms as the tea ceremony, ikebana, and ukiyo-e. Ukiyo-e's have evolved into the modern day manga in Japan while ikebana and the tea ceremony have still kept their essence even after so many years. Kimonos were also a way for women to express themselves and the prints on the kimono usually represented a season.

### Category 1 question 2, Influence on Tokyo Art Forms

I believe that the Japanese style gardens have a very big influence on the art forms found in Tokyo. Because Tokyo is so modern, it still wants to be able to incorporate nature within its buildings. This gives a nostalgia effect. This gives birth to mini Zen Gardens, greeneries, and nature sculptures inside of some buildings. These buildings also show how the Japanese people incorporate the minimalistic feel in the nature sculptures and plants. This minimalism comes from values from the tea ceremony. The aesthetic of the Japanese style gardens can also be seen in the omotesando building in Tokyo. Furthermore, I believe that westernization historically changed the art form in Japan. The Japanese incorporated foreign ideas and molded them together with the Japanese aesthetic and something new was created. One example is the Tokyo Tower. It is painted red to represent Japan but the actual structure is made to look like the Eiffel Tower.

### Category 2, Question 3, visual culture

The ornate kimonos worn by geisha in Kyoto have influenced visual culture in modern day Japan. They can be worn by anyone of any age, and they have many different representations. The kimono is still relevant even in modern times. Many symbols on the kimono are related to religion and the seasons. Kimonos are used in advertisements to represent nostalgia and they are also found in other visual cultures such as anime and manga. The shamisen is also an example of something unique to Japan that has shaped the culture. The sound it makes is the representation of Japan. To me it is the epitome of visual culture in Japan, because just hearing a shamisen play would bring back memories of nostalgia. Ikebana also represents visual culture because incorporating of the four seasons in Japan is very important. Representation of the four seasons is found in all types of visual culture in Japan because it is related to kami.

### Category 2, Question 4, Ukiyoe aesthetics

I believe that ukiyoe reflects and has shaped visual culture substantially in Japan. Many ukiyoe's are influenced by the seasons, people in society, change in time, landscape, and mythology. The aesthetic in many ukiyoe are somewhat abstract because they like to use animal to represent what they want to say. For example one picture I used, shows a procession of foxes dressed in kimonos walking in a spring rain. This Ukiyoe to me represents the mythological side of Japan with the foxes or kitsune representing the kami. Another type of ukiyoe that were made in Japan would show a change in time. My other ukiyoe shows the start of westernization in Japan. The aesthetics in the more modern ukiyoe show more buildings around the landscape and the change in attire that people were wearing. The buildings in the picture are also starting to look more European around this time period.



Category 3, Question 5, pre-modern and Contemporary Japan

I believe that pre-modern Japan was influenced by such things as traditional art forms such as the tea ceremony, ikebana, calligraphy, kabuki, and others. The values for many of Japan's art forms originated with kami and the practices surrounding it. All of the festivals, seasonal events, and commemorative events had to do with kami or celebrate kami. These social gathering at festivals created an audience for visual art forms. Furthermore I think that pre-modern Japan took concepts from surrounding countries such as China and Russia and created their own unique styles. An example would be the architecture of Japan as a visual art form. I believe that all of contemporary Japan has its root in pre-modern Japan. The essences of most of these art forms are still kept alive today in modern Japan because there is still are still strong values behind them. One example is with how the shamisen is still being taught in some school systems. I believe that his helps children become familiar with local traditions and find a new appreciation for an old art form.

#### Category 3, Question 6, Tradition vs. Contemporary Japan

When I think of traditional Japan what comes to mind most often is nature scenery and Japans unique art forms. I think the reason for this is because for one Japan has always advertised itself for its "natural" beauty. Furthermore, after learning about the visual culture of Japan what seems traditional to me is the many art forms that were created. Most of these art forms surround themselves in nature so those are the types of images that come to mind when I think of traditional japan. I think of contemporary Japan as a mix of the old, new, and foreign. Taking Tokyo for example, although it is this huge technologically advanced megalopolis, you can still find small shrines and parks scattered all over the city. The people who live in the city still want to experience some of the traditional aspects of Japanese life. I also see contemporary Japan as incorporating foreign things into its lifestyle. One example of this is the Asakusa Palace which looks very European.

#### Category 4, Question 7, Compare Japanese art aesthetic with other Cultures

To me the embodiment of the art aesthetic in Japan is abstractness. There is no definite reason why or where something was placed to make it pleasing to the Japanese. One example would be with the Japanese style Zen gardens. The sand in the garden is manipulated to the Japanese aesthetics. Japanese gardens focus on incorporating the characteristics of nature, and the concept of space arrangement. Most of the landscape found at such places as shrines and temples are actually coordinated nature that is based on sense of space and aesthetics. It is manipulated nature. Every plant, tree, shrub, rock and moss has been coordinated to look natural in these environments. In comparison to the abstract type gardens you have the perfectly arranged gardens found in the palaces of European estates. I believe that the European style gardens are coordinated to look perfect instead of abstract. Furthermore I believe that gardens in Japan try to incorporate the essence of kami while the European gardens are there to be more pleasing to the eye.

#### Category 4, Question 8, Wabi-sabi Concept

Wabi-sabi is a very hard concept to wrap my head around. Even after learning about it I get the feeling that its interpretation depends on the person. My interpretation of wabi-sabi is finding perfection in something that may look imperfect or plain. I think a good example of wabi-sabi is in the Japanese Tea Ceremony. Everything surrounding the tea ceremony is very modest from the bowls the tea is served in to the campiness of the room everyone sits in. It is not meant to be an elegant affair but a place where all people can come together and be humble to one another. I think that the purest ways of the tea ceremony are based off of wabi-sabi concepts. You can also find wabi-sabi in nature. I think that a picture of a sakura tree without any petals could be considered wabi-sabi, because normally people don't look at a sakura tree unless it is in bloom. The sakura tree would show undeclared beauty.

Category 5, Question 9, influence of art in my life

In truth the role of art in my life did not come from America but from the art forms found in Japan. I do not think that America incorporates art as widely as Japan does in its society. America is represented by it performing arts, such as theatre and its motion pictures. While these are entertaining in themselves, they did not play a large role in shaping who I am today. What has influenced me the most is the manga found in Japan. At first some of the subject of the manga I read was strange but they helped me learn a new culture. Through reading manga I have also learned about other types of art forms found in Japan such as martial arts. Although manga are for the most parts works of fictions they also able to convey the essence of traditional Japan and contemporary Japan. It has given me a new appreciation of art forms outside of my native country.

Category 5, Question 10, Japan in 21<sup>st</sup> Century

When I think of modern Japan or Japan in the 21<sup>st</sup> century what comes to mind most of the time is the pop culture and technology. What initially drew me to the Japanese culture was in pop culture; especially the anime and manga aspect of Japan. I think that it is so interesting that Japanese manga originated from an actual traditional art form called ukiyoe while western comic, to my knowledge, didn't originate from a historical art form. I also feel that manga isn't just for one demographic but is used all through Japan for a variety of things. It is used in teaching students certain subjects in school. I would guess that for people who have not studied any of Japans culture they would still associate Japan with technology. That just show how much of an influence technology is in Japan. I believe that it was necessary for Japan to become so technologically advanced because of their land situation. They need to fit all of the population in such a small land area.