



Wabi Sabi: What is it?

“Wabi sabi is an intuitive appreciation of a transient beauty in the physical world that reflects the irreversible flow of life in the spiritual world. It is an understated beauty that exists in the modest, rustic, imperfect, or even decayed, an aesthetic sensibility that finds melancholic beauty in the impermanence of all things”(Juniper 51).

Originating from the Japanese words *wabi*, meaning austere, refined beauty, and *sabi*, meaning aged, mellow beauty with overtones of isolation and loneliness, wabi sabi has many qualities which include:

1. an appreciation of the short-lived beauty of the physical world
2. simplicity
3. humility
4. rusticity
5. loneliness
6. melancholy/sadness
7. peacefulness

(Juniper ix)



Keeping a Wabi Sabi Journal

For the next week, spend at least fifteen minutes a day writing in your journal about your experiences with wabi sabi. You must include, but are not limited to, the following topics for writing:

1. Day 1:
 - a. Write an explanation of your understanding of wabi sabi based on the Power Point presentation, class discussion, and your reading of pages 1-14 in Andrew Juniper's book.
 - b. Go for a ten-minute walk in search of wabi sabi in your world. Describe two things which you identified and explain how each one fits your definition of wabi sabi.
2. Day 2:
 - a. Copy the haiku you wrote in class today into your journal.
 - b. Write about how the objects that you and the members of your group brought to class and the haiku you wrote could be seen as examples of wabi sabi.
 - c. Explore the thoughts and feelings that your experiences with wabi sabi have provoked so far.
3. Day 3:
 - a. After reading the chapters “Wabi Sabi in the Art of Zen” (pages 15-30 in Juniper's book) and “Wabi Sabi and the Japanese Character” (pages 53-58), reflect on the similarities and differences between the way you view the world and express yourself and the way a Japanese person might if they were influenced by Zen Buddhism and wabi sabi.
4. Days 4-7: Continue to collect and record examples of wabi sabi in your world and explore ideas for your original wabi sabi art project.

Wabi Sabi Art Project and Final Reflection

PART I : Original Art

Using whatever medium best suits you (for example: drawing, painting, sculpture, haiku, photography, music), create your own wabi sabi art which exhibits the following wabi sabi qualities:

1. an appreciation of the short-lived beauty of the physical world
2. simplicity
3. humility
4. rusticity
5. loneliness
6. melancholy/sadness
7. peacefulness

PART II: Final Reflection

Write an essay in which you reflect on the following:

1. what you have learned about wabi sabi and its connection to Japanese culture and values
2. how your wabi sabi art reflects what you have learned
3. how a continuing appreciation for and awareness of wabi sabi might affect your life