

ARTH 2071 Japanese Art History
Visual Arts Vocabulary

- Abstract:** not realistic, though often based on an actual subject.
- Aesthetics:** the study of the beautiful in art; defined by the visual, moral, and social standards of the culture in which it was created; focuses on the nature of beauty, the nature and value of art, our responses to art, and how we define what is art.
- Architecture:** the art and science of designing and erecting buildings.
- Art:** the making or doing of things that have form and beauty; usually creative and unique, art expresses human feelings and spiritual beliefs.
- Asymmetrical:** different on either side of a central axis (a line drawn down the middle).
- Balance:** equilibrium in a composition, either symmetrical or asymmetrical.
- Belief:** spiritual ideas about something held to be true by a person or culture; generally about why or how something occurs;
- Bronze:** an alloy of copper and tin used for sculpture.
- Calligraphy:** beautiful or expert handwriting; often a special style created by artists.
- Caricature:** character studies that usually exaggerate one or more features, often with humorous or satirical intent.
- Carving:** a subtractive method of sculpture; taking away wood or stone.
- Ceramic:** any object made of clay and fired (baked at high temperatures); pottery.
- Composition:** the manner in which the forms, lines and colors of an artwork are arranged.
- Cool Colors:** colors that recede (appear to go away from the viewer), such as blue, green and violet.
- Creative:** original, expressive or imaginative; the ability to put together lines, colors, forms and subjects in ways that are new and different.
- Decorative Art:** artwork using the elements and principles of design created on everyday objects such as clothing, jewelry and household goods.
- Design:** the organization of line, form, color, value, texture and space in an eye-pleasing arrangement; artists use repetition, emphasis, unity, proportion and/or contrast to organize their art works.
- Element:** artistic design considerations such as color, line, texture, shape or form and space.
- Emphasis:** a design principle that gives dominance to a particular area through color, size or repetition.
- Figure:** the human or animal form used in creating art; i.e. figure-drawing.
- Illustration:** an artwork developed to accompany a story, advertisement, or written text.
- Landscape:** an outdoor scenery painting; also includes the cityscape or seascape.
- Medium:** the material that is used in an artwork; i.e. watercolor, oil, marble, bronze; plural media.
- Modeling:** in sculpture building up clay or wax into a form; in painting varying the colors to suggest a three-dimensional quality.
- Motif:** a main element, idea or feature, specifically in art, literature or music; a repeated figure in a design.
- Mural:** a continuous painting made to fill a wall.
- Narrative Art:** an artwork that tells a story.

Patron: a person, usually wealthy and influential, who sponsors and supports a person, activity etc.; for example, a patron commissions an artist to create a work of art.

Pattern: an overall design that repeats the same lines or shapes.

Perspective: a formal method of creating a three-dimensional effect on a two-dimensional surface. There are three kinds: visual perspective – making distant objects smaller; aerial or atmospheric – colors in the distance are hazier or bluer; linear perspective – having lines converge to meet at a single point on the horizon.

Pigment: powdered earth, minerals and chemicals, ground and mixed with a binder such as oil.

Portrait: a painting, photograph or other likeness of a person, especially one showing a face.

Prehistoric Art: created before a culture develops a written language; the period of time depends upon the culture.

Primary Colors: red, yellow and blue; may be mixed to make other colors but cannot themselves be mixed from other colors.

Print: a work of art, usually on paper, created from a “plate” that has been transformed through a technique such as engraving, etching or woodcut and then inked and the image is transferred to paper.

Relief: in sculpture and architecture the projection of figures and forms from a flat surface so that they stand partly free.

Religious Artwork: artwork that shows religious images or is used in religious ceremonies.

Sculpture: the art of carving wood, chiseling stone, casting and welding metal, modeling clay or wax, or assembling these materials into three-dimensional representations, such as statues, figures, forms, etc.

Secondary Colors: green, purple and orange; the colors obtained by mixing the primary colors.

Shade: any color mixed with black; it makes the color darker.

Spiritual: relating to the nature of the spirit – the unseen force that gives life; concerned with the soul or a supernatural being, for example, gods or God.

Style: the distinctive way that an artist or group of artists uses the elements and principles of design in their works and often their choice of subjects for their compositions.

Symbol: something that stands for or represents another thing; especially an object to represent an abstract idea, as a dove represents peace.

Symmetrical: the same on either side of a central axis (a line drawn down the middle).

Texture: the tactile quality of a surface; smooth, rough, slick, sticky.

Tint: any color mixed with white; it makes the color lighter.

Value: a social principle, standard or quality considered worthwhile or desirable; common values are compassion, freedom, honesty, justice, peace, respect, responsibility, tolerance.

Visual Arts: a broad category that includes the traditional fine arts such as drawing, painting, printmaking, and sculpture; communication and design arts such as film, television, graphics, and product design; architecture and environmental arts such as urban, building, interior and landscape design; folk arts; and other works of art such as ceramics, fibers, jewelry, works in wood, paper and other materials.

Warm Colors: colors that advance (appear to come towards the viewer), such as red, red-orange, orange and yellow.