

Chinese and Korean Art

24

TIME PERIOD: FROM PREHISTORIC TIMES TO THE PRESENT

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING: South, East, and Southeast Asia have ancient artistic traditions.

Essential Knowledge:

- Ancient ceramics survive from China and India.
- Religious beliefs developed locally, but spread throughout Asia.
- Rich artistic traditions were exchanged throughout the great civilizations of Asia.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING: Great religions were established in Asia.

Essential Knowledge:

- Ancient belief systems, called Indic, spread throughout the region, eventually developing into religions like Hinduism and Buddhism.
- Buddhism spread through east Asia. Chinese religions were influenced by Buddhism and stressed living in harmony with nature and one another. Daoism and Confucianism emphasized living ethically within society's boundaries.
- Buddhism is a visual art form, noted for its religious images and narratives.
- Islam, Christianity, and ancient European cultures play a role in Asian art.
- Architecture is best expressed by religious temples, shrines, and rock-cut caves.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING: Asian art is a reflection of Asian aesthetics.

Essential Knowledge:

- Chinese art is characterized by paintings on scrolls with limited color.
- There is a wide range of materials used in this region.
- Uniquely Asian art forms include Buddhist and Hindu images and buildings.
- Calligraphy is a central art form in Chinese art.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING: Asian art spreads throughout the world through trade.

Essential Knowledge:

- The Silk Road was key to the spread of artistic styles.
- Asian art shows evidence of the interconnectivity of regional schools with the wider world.
- Asian art heavily influenced the art of Europe.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although Chinese culture seems monolithic to those in the West, China has the size and population of Europe, with the same ethnic diversity and the same number of languages. To speak in general terms of Chinese art, therefore, has the same validity as speaking in general terms about European art.

To make such a diverse subject more manageable, Chinese art is divided into historical periods named after the families who ruled China for vast stretches of time. These families, united by blood and tradition, formed dynasties, and their impact on Chinese culture has been enormous.

The first ruler of a united China was Emperor **Shih Huangdi**, who reigned in the third century B.C.E. He not only unified China politically, but was also responsible for codifying written Chinese, standardizing weights and measures, and establishing a uniform currency. Moreover, he started the famous Great Wall and began his majestic tomb. While historians have taken a more critical look at Shi Huangdi's accomplishments, his insistence on government promotion based on achievement rather than family connections had far-reaching effects on Chinese society.

Dynastic fortunes reached their greatest height during the Tang Dynasty (618–906 C.E.). Brilliant periods were also achieved under the Yuan of Kublai Khan (1215–1294) and the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), which built the **Forbidden City** (Figure 24.2).

A particularly long-lasting and artistically rich period in Korea was formed during the Silla Dynasty (57 B.C.E.–935 C.E.). Silla rulers united with the Tang Dynasty to solidify territorial gains on the Korean peninsula. They later waged a successful war to expel the Chinese who had intended to form puppet governments throughout Korea. Silla rulers established a royal burial ground in present-day Gyeongju. The largest tomb measures over 260 feet in diameter and 400 feet long, and contains a wide array of imperial gold regalia, jewelry, pottery, and metalwork.

East Asia has been marked by a great deal of turbulence in the twentieth century. The Qing Dynasty collapsed in 1911, replaced by a chaotic rule under the Republic of China. The Japanese invasion in the 1930s caused more upheaval, as did the eventual triumph of the communist forces under Mao Tse-tung in 1949. Peace still did not settle over China since internal struggles, such as the Cultural Revolution and the Great Leap Forward, ended up being political motives to enforce purges and persecutions.

Similarly in Korea, occupation by Japan left great scars on the Korean physical and mental landscape. The 1945 Japanese collapse left Korea as a nation divided in two. The subsequent Korean War achieved little—the country lay in ruins, and is still divided roughly the same way it was before the war. Today South Korea has a vibrant economy and is a world leader in many scientific and economic related fields. North Korea, however, remains economically stagnant.

Patronage and Artistic Life

Calligraphy is the central artistic expression in traditional China, standing as it does at a midpoint between poetry and painting. Those who wanted important state positions had to pass a battery of exams that included calligraphy. Even emperors were known to have been accomplished calligraphers, painters, and poets. Standard written Chinese is often at variance with the more cursive or running script used in paintings, some of which is so artistically rendered that modern Chinese readers cannot decipher it. Rather than letters, which are used in European languages, Chinese employs characters, each of which represents a word

or an idea. Therefore, the artistic representation of a word inherently carries more meaning than a creatively written individual letter in English.

Artists worked under the patronage of religion or the state, although a counterculture was developed by a group called the **literati** who painted for themselves, eschewing public commissions and personal fame. These artists produced paintings of a highly individualized nature, not caring what the world at large would think.

At first the Korean language was written with adapted Chinese characters called **hanja**. A native alphabet was invented in 1444 during the reign of Kong Sejong, a king of the Joseon Dynasty. However, many Koreans preferred to remain loyal to the Chinese script, seeing the native writing as common and for the uneducated. During the twentieth century, standard Korean began to adopt the native script as its own. Today, it is more likely to be written in a western style—that is, horizontally and from left to right—in contrast to other Asian scripts.

CHINESE PHILOSOPHIES

Daoism and **Confucianism**, the two great philosophies of ancient China, dominate all aspects of Chinese art, from the original artistic thought to the final execution. Dao, meaning “the Way,” can be characterized as a religious journey that allows the pilgrim to wander meaningfully in search of self-expression. It was begun by **Laozi** (604–531 B.C.E.), a philosopher who believed in escaping society’s pressures, achieving serenity, and working toward a oneness with nature. Daoists emphasize individual expression and strongly embrace the philosophy of doing unto others. The yin and the yang are well-known Daoist symbols (Figure 24.3c).

The great Chinese philosopher **Confucius** (551–479 B.C.E.) wrote about behavior, relationships, and duty in a series of precepts called *The Analects*. Built on a system of mutual respect, the Confucian model presents an ideal man whose attributes include loyalty, morality, generosity, and humanity. An important ingredient in Confucianism is respect for traditional values.

CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

The design of the stupa, a Buddhist building associated with India, moved eastward with missionaries along the Great Silk Road, transforming itself into the **pagoda** when it reached China. Built for a sacred purpose, the pagoda characteristically has one design that is repeated vertically on each level, each smaller than the design below it. In this way, pagodas achieve substantial height through a repetition of forms.

The exterior walls of a courtyard style residence (Figure 24.1) kept the crowded outside world away and framed an atrium in which family members resided in comparative tranquility. In harmony with Confucian thought, elders were to be honored and so were to live in a suite of rooms on the warmer north end of the courtyard. Children lived in the wings, servants in the south end. The southeast corner usually functioned as an entrance, the southwest as a lavatory.

This courtyard-style arrangement is reflected on a massive scale in the **Forbidden City**. The emperor’s seat is in the Hall of Supreme Harmony, itself on the north end of a courtyard; the throne faces south. The entire Forbidden City is a rectangular grid with its southern entrance and its high walls keeping the concerns of the multitude at a safe distance.

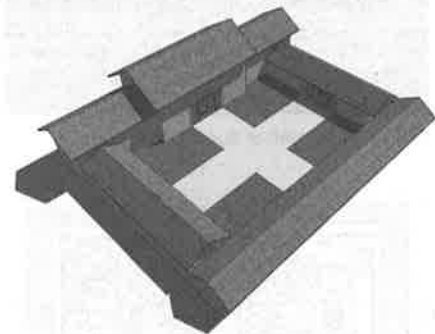


Figure 24.1: Chinese courtyard-style residence with the principal structure on the north side facing south.



Figure 24.2a: Forbidden City, 15th century and later, stone masonry, marble, brick, wood, and ceramic tile, Beijing, China



Figure 24.2b: Front Gate of the Forbidden City



Figure 24.2c: Hall of Supreme Harmony

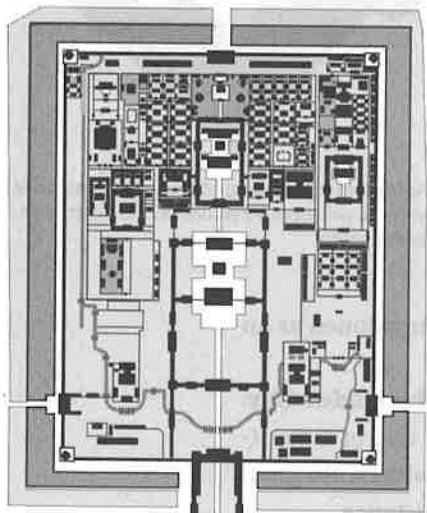


Figure 24.2d: Plan of Forbidden City

The Chinese, both in the Forbidden City and in less lavish projects, used wood for their principal building material. Tiled roofs seem to float over structures with eaves that hang away from the wall space and curve up to allow light in and keep rain out. Walls protect the interior from the weather, but do not support the building. Instead, support comes from an interior fabric of wooden columns that are grooved together rather than nailed. Corbeled brackets are used to transition the tops of columns to the swinging eaves. Wooden architecture is painted both to preserve the wood and enhance artistic effect.

Forbidden City, fifteenth century, Ming Dynasty, stone masonry, marble, brick, wood, ceramic tile, Beijing, China (Figures 24.2a–24.2d)

- Largest and most complete Chinese architectural ensemble in existence
- 9,000 rooms
- Walls 30 feet high to keep people out and those inside in
- Forbidden City so named because only the royal court could enter
- Each corner of the rectangular plan has a tower representing the four corners of the world
- Focus is the Hall of Supreme Harmony, the throne room and seat of power; wood structure made with elaborately painted beams; meant for grand ceremonies
- Yellow tile roofs and red painted wooden beams placed on marble foundations unify the structures in the Forbidden City into an artistic whole
- Hall of Supreme Harmony ceremonies: new year, the winter solstice, emperor's birthday
- Surrounding wall of the Forbidden City characteristic of a Chinese city: privacy within provides protection; containment part of Chinese culture
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Centers of Power**
 - Versailles (Figure 17.3a)
 - Nan Madol (Figures 28.1a, 28.1b)
 - Barry and Pugin, Houses of Parliament (Figures 20.1a, 20.1b)

CHINESE AND KOREAN PAINTING

East Asian painting appears in many formats, including album leaves, fans, murals, and scrolls. Scrolls come in two formats: The handscroll (Figure 24.3a), which is horizontal and can be read on a desk or table, and the hanging scroll (Figure 24.3b), which is supported by a pole or hung for a time on a wall and unraveled vertically. No scrolls were allowed on permanent view in a home—they were something to be admired, studied, and analyzed, not hung for mere decorative qualities. Scrolls were stored away in specifically designed cabinets.

Handscrolls are read right to left. Although paper is sometimes used as a painting surface, silks are preferred and specially chosen by the artist for their color and texture to evoke a mood. The silk is then attached to wooden dowels and secured at the ends. When the scrolls are unwound, a title panel first appears, much like the title page in a book. As the scroll is carefully unrolled a section at a time, the viewer encounters both text and painting intertwined. Square red markings, made by artistically rendered seals, identify either the artist or the owners of the painting. In Chinese art, it is considered acceptable to comment on a work by writing poetry in praise of what has been read or seen. The commentaries are written on the last panel, called the **colophon**.

Landscape paintings are highly prized in Chinese art. Like European paintings of the same date, they do not seek to represent a particular forest or mountain, but reflect an artistic construct yielding a philosophical idea. Typically, some parts of a painting are empty and barren, suggesting openness and space. Other parts are crowded, almost impenetrable. This intertwining of crowded and empty spaces is a reflection of the Daoist theory of **yin** and **yang** (Figure 24.3c), in which opposites flow into one another.

Another specialty is **porcelain**. Subtle and refined vase shapes are combined with imaginative designs to create works of art that appear to be utilitarian, but are actually objects that stand alone. To achieve maximum gloss and finish, sophisticated glazing techniques are applied to the surface. Glazing has the added benefit of protecting the vase from wear.

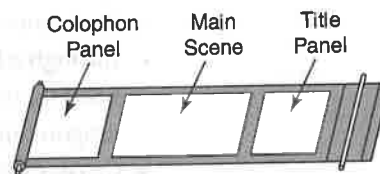


Figure 24.3a: A Chinese handscroll read right to left. It starts with the title panel, moves to the main scene, and ends with a colophon.

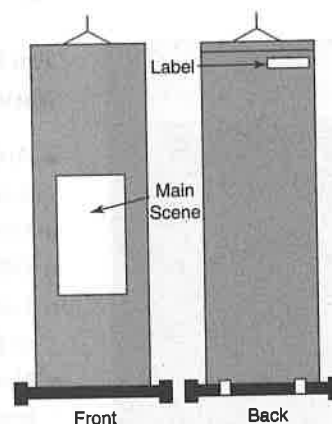


Figure 24.3b: A Chinese hanging scroll with the main scene on the front and the title on the top back.

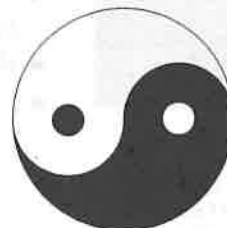


Figure 24.3c: Yin and yang

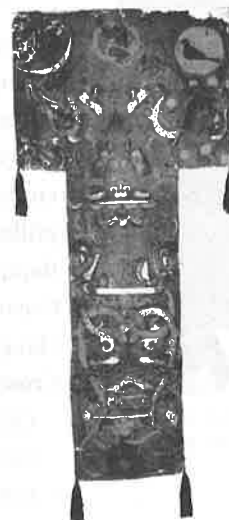


Figure 24.4: Funeral Banner of Lady Dai (Xin Zhui), 180 B.C.E., painted silk, Hunan Provincial Museum, Changsha

The Literati

Some artists rejected the restrictive nature of court art and developed a highly individualized style. These artists, called **literati**, worked as painters, furniture makers, and landscape architects, as well as in other fields. The literati were often scholars rather than professional artists, and by tradition did not sell their works, but gave them to friends and connoisseurs.

Funeral Banner of Lady Dai (Xin Zhui), 180 B.C.E., painted silk, Hunan Provincial Museum, Changsha (Figure 24.4)

- Lady Dai died 168 B.C.E. in Hunan province; Han Dynasty
- Tomb found with over 100 objects in 1972
- T-shaped silk banner covering the inner coffin of the intact body
- Probably carried in a procession to the tomb then placed over the body to speed its journey to the afterlife
- Yin symbols at left; yang symbols at right; the center mixes the two philosophies
- Painted in three distinct regions
- Top: Heaven with crescent moon at left, and the legend of the ten suns at the right; in the center two seated officers guard the entrance to the heavenly world
- Middle: earth with Lady Dai in center on white platform about to make her journey to heaven with a walking stick that was found in her tomb;

mourners and assistants appear by her side; dragons' bodies are symbolically circled through a bi in a yin and yang exchange

- Bottom: the underworld; symbolic low creatures frame the underworld scene: fish, turtles, dragon tails; tomb guardians protect the body
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Fabric Arts**
 - Hiapo (Figure 28.6)
 - All-T'oqapu Tunic (Figure 26.10)
 - Ringgold, *Dancing at the Louvre* (Figure 29.11)



Fan Kuan, *Travelers among Mountains and Streams*, c. 1000, ink on silk, National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan (Figure 24.5)

- Artist isolated himself away from civilization to be with nature and study it, for his landscapes; Daoist philosophy
- Produced very complex landscapes
- Different brushstrokes describe different kinds of trees: coniferous, deciduous, etc.
- Long waterfall on right balanced by mountain on left; waterfall accents the height of the mountain
- Not a pure landscape: donkeys laden with firewood are driven by two men; a small temple appears in the forest; man seen as small and insignificant in a vast natural world
- Mists created by ink washes; silhouette the roofs of the temple
- Might be his only surviving work; signature hidden in the bushes on the lower right
- Hanging scroll
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Figures Set in Landscape**
 - Cole, *The Oxbow* (Figure 20.6)
 - Breughel, *Hunters in the Snow* (Figure 14.6)
 - Circle of the Gonzalez Family, *Screen with Hunting Scenes* (Figure 18.3b)

Figure 24.5: Fan Kuan, *Travelers among Mountains and Streams*, c. 1000, ink on silk, National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan



Portrait of Sin Sukju, 1417–1475, ink and color on silk (Figure 24.6)

- Korean prime minister (1461–1464 and from 1471–1475) and soldier
- Portrait made when he was a second grade civil officer: insignia designed with clouds and a wild goose
- Korean portraits emphasize how the subject made a great contribution to the country and how the spirit of loyalty to king and country was valued by Confucian philosophy
- Repainted over the years, especially in 1475, when he died
- Great scholar
- Hanging scroll
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Painting Technique**
 - Oil: Campin (?), *Annunciation Triptych* (Figure 14.1)
 - Fresco: Rivera, *Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in the Alameda Park* (Figure 22.30)
 - Ink and pencil: Smith, *Lying with the Wolf* (Figure 29.20)

Figure 24.6: *Portrait of Sin Sukju*, 1417–1475, ink and color on silk

Chairman Mao En Route to Anyuan, based on an oil painting by Liu Chunhua, 1969, color lithograph, Private Collection (Figure 24.7)

- Painted during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76; high art was dismissed as feudal or bourgeois
- Poster-like; vivid colors, dramatic and obvious political message
- Dominated by pictorial representation
- Art was done anonymously; individual artistic fame seen as counter-cultural in a collectivist society
- A moment in the 1920s; Mao on his way to Anyuan to lead a miner's strike
- Mao worked for reforms for miners; supported a local strike for better wages, working conditions, and education
- For many people this action formed a permanent bond with the Communist party
- Iconic representation of the Great Leader's career
- May be the most reproduced image ever made: 900,000,000 copies were generated
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Non-Western Works Using Western Ideas**
 - Bandolier Bag (Figure 26.11)
 - Lindauer, *Tamati Waka Nene* (Figure 28.7)
 - Frontispiece from the Codex Mendoza (Figure 18.1)



Figure 24.7: *Chairman Mao En Route to Anyuan*, based on an oil painting by Liu Chunhua, 1969, color lithograph, Private Collection

CHINESE SCULPTURE

China is a monumental civilization that has produced large-scale sculpture as a sign of grandeur. Enormous scale, without sacrificing artistic integrity, is a typical Chinese characteristic epitomized by the terra-cotta army of **Shi Huangdi** (Figures 24.8a and 24.8b) and the huge **seated Buddha at Longmen** (Figure 24.9a). The Chinese have created a dazzling number of sculptures cut from the rock *in situ*, a technique probably imported from India.

At the same time, Chinese sculpture is known for intricately designed miniature objects. Those made of jade are especially prized for their beauty; they are durable and polish to a high shine in a matte green-gray color.

Army of Emperor Shi Huangdi, painted terra-cotta, c. 221–209 B.C.E., Qin Dynasty, Lintong, China (Figures 24.8a and 24.8b)

- About 8,000 terra-cotta warriors, 100 wooden chariots, 2 bronze chariots, 30,000 weapons buried as part of the tomb of Emperor Shi Huangdi
- Soldiers are six-feet tall, some fierce, some proud, some confident; taller than the average person of the time
- A representation of a Chinese army marching into the next world



Figure 24.8a: Army of Emperor Shi Huangdi, painted terra-cotta, c. 221–209 B.C.E., Qin Dynasty, Lintong, China



Figure 24.8b: Army of Emperor Shi Huangdi, painted terra-cotta, c. 221–209 B.C.E., Qin Dynasty, Lintong, China

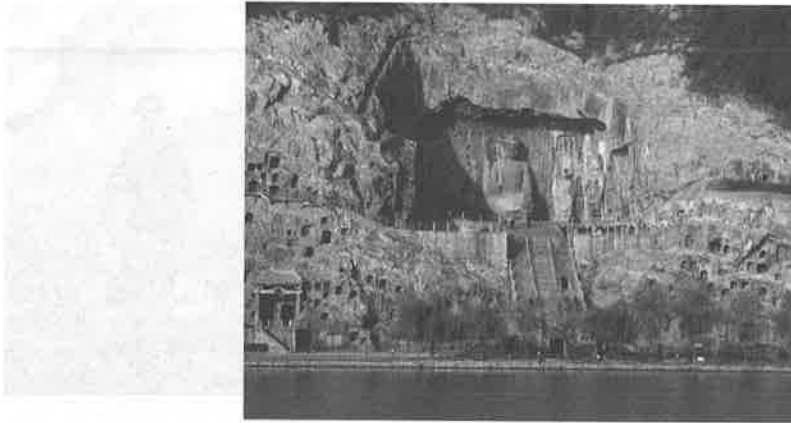


Figure 24.9a: Longmen Caves with Vairocana Buddha, 493–1127, Tang Dynasty, limestone, Luoyang, China



Figure 24.9b: Longmen Caves detail



Figure 24.9c: Longmen Caves detail

- Daoism seen in the individualization of each soldier despite their numbers
- Originally colorfully painted
- Discovered in 1974
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Buried Works**
 - Tomb of Tutankhamun (Figure 3.11)
 - Catacomb of Priscilla (Figure 7.1a)
 - Tomb of the Triclinium (Figure 5.3)

Longmen Caves, 493–1127, Tang Dynasty, limestone, Luoyang, China (Figures 24.9a, 24.9b, and 24.9c)

- Caves along the banks of the Yi River
- Sculptures and reliefs carved from the existing rock; some colossal, some small

- Documents attest that 800,000 people worked on the site; 110,000 Buddhist stone statues, more than 60 stupas, and 2,800 inscriptions on steles
- Buddha arranged as if on an altar of a temple, deeply set into the rock face
- Inscription states that Empress Wu Zetian was the principal patroness of the site, and she used her private funds to finance the project
- Vairocana Buddha having monk attendants, bodhisattvas, and guardians flanking
- Elongated legs and exaggerated poses
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Grand Outdoor Sculpture**
 - Great Altar of Zeus and Athena at Pergamon (Figures 4.18a, 4.18b)
 - Bamiyan Buddha (Figure 23.2)
 - Moai (Figure 28.11)

Gold and jade crown, fifth–sixth century, metalwork, National Museum of Korea, Seoul, South Korea (Figure 24.10)

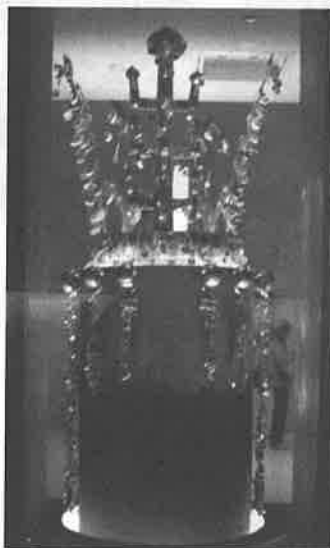


Figure 24.10: Gold and jade crown, fifth–sixth century, metalwork, National Museum of Korea, South Korea

- Uncovered in Gyeongju, Korea from a royal tomb
- Symbolizes geometric trees
- Antler forms influenced by Shamanistic practices in Siberia

- Very light weight; had limited use; maybe for ceremonial occasions, perhaps only for burial
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Metalwork**
 - Merovingian Looped Fibula (Figure 10.1)
 - Golden Stool (Figure 27.4)
 - El Anatsui, *Old Man's Cloth* (Figure 29.23)

PORCELAIN

Almost every world culture has a tradition of ceramics, few as fine as those from China. Originally most ceramics were made by the **coiling** method, in which clay was rolled onto a long, flat surface so that it resembles a long cord. The cords were wrapped around themselves creating a sculpture, sometimes of considerable size. To remove the appearance of the coils, the edges were often smoothed out with the artist's hands or an instrument.

Later the clay was placed on a round tray and made to revolve using a pedal; this began the invention of the **potter's wheel**. The process of making pottery on a wheel is called **throwing**. The potter uses his or her hands to shape the pottery as it revolves.

Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368) vases have a distinctive blue and white color. The cobalt used to make the iridescent blue was imported from Iran and greatly prized by the Chinese.

The David Vases, 1351, white porcelain with cobalt blue underglaze, British Museum, London (Figure 24.11)

- One of the most important examples of blue and white porcelain in existence
- Made for the altar of a Daoist temple, along with an incense burner which has not been found; a typical altar set
- Dedication on the side of the neck of the vessels; believed to be earliest known blue and white porcelain dedication
- Inscription on one of the vases: "Zhang Wenjin, from Jingtang community, Dejiao village, Shuncheng township, Yushan county, Xinzhou circuit, a disciple of the Holy Gods, is pleased to offer a set comprising one incense burner and a pair of flower vases to General Hu Jingyi at the Original Palace in Kingyuan, as a prayer for the protection and blessing of the whole family and for the peace of his sons and daughters. Carefully offered on an auspicious day in the Fourth Month, Eleventh year of the Zhizheng reign."
- Blue color imported from Iran; Chinese expansion into western Asia makes the cobalt blue available
- Vases were modeled after bronzes
- Elephant-head-shaped handles
- Neck and foot of vases: leaves and flowers
- Central section: Chinese dragons with traditional long bodies and beards; dragons have scales and claws and are set in a sea of clouds
- Named after Sir Percival David, a collector of Chinese art
- **Cross-Cultural Connections: Porcelain and Ceramic**
 - Martínez, Black-on-black ceramic vessel (Figure 26.14)
 - Niobid Krater (Figure 4.19)
 - Terra-Cotta Warriors (Figures 24.8a, 24.8b)



Figure 24.11: The David Vases, 1351, white porcelain with cobalt blue underglaze, British Museum, London

VOCABULARY

- Bi:** a round ceremonial disk found in ancient Chinese tombs; characterized by having a circular hole in the center, which may have symbolized heaven (Figure 24.4)
- Bodhisattva:** a deity who refrains from entering nirvana to help others (Figure 24.9c)
- Coiling:** a method of creating pottery in which a rope-like strand of clay is wrapped and layered into a shape before being fired in a kiln
- Colophon:** a commentary on the end panel of a Chinese handscroll; an inscription at the end of a manuscript containing relevant information on its publication (Figure 24.4)
- Confucianism:** a philosophical belief begun by Confucius that stresses education, devotion to family, mutual respect, and traditional culture
- Daoism:** a philosophical belief begun by Laozi that stresses individual expression and a striving to find balance in one's life
- Hanja:** Chinese characters used in Korean script with a Korean pronunciation
- Literati:** a sophisticated and scholarly group of Chinese artists who painted for themselves rather than for fame and mass acceptance. Their work is highly individualized
- Pagoda:** a tower built of many stories. Each succeeding story is identical in style to the one beneath it, only smaller. Pagodas typically have dramatically projecting eaves that curl up at the ends
- Porcelain:** a ceramic made from clay that when fired in a kiln produces a product that is hard, white, brittle, and shiny
- Potter's wheel:** a device that usually has a pedal used to make the flat circular table spin, so that a potter can create pottery
- Throwing:** to mold forms on a potter's wheel
- Vairocana:** the universal Buddha, a source of enlightenment; also known as the Supreme Buddha who represents "emptiness," that is, freedom from earthly matters to help achieve salvation (Figure 24.9c)
- Yin and yang:** complementary polarities. The yin is a feminine symbol that has dark, soft, moist, and weak characteristics. The yang is the male symbol that has bright, hard, dry, and strong characteristics (Figure 24.3)

SUMMARY

The great Chinese philosophies of Daoism and Confucianism dominate the fine arts, as well as all intellectual thought in China. They express the relationship of buildings to one another in courtyard-style residences from the most humble to the Forbidden City. They also articulate a relationship of the forms in Chinese painting.

Chinese artists apprenticed under a master and worked under a system of patronage controlled by religion or government. A powerful minority, the literati, deliberately chose to walk away from traditional artistic venues and cultivate a more individualized type of art.

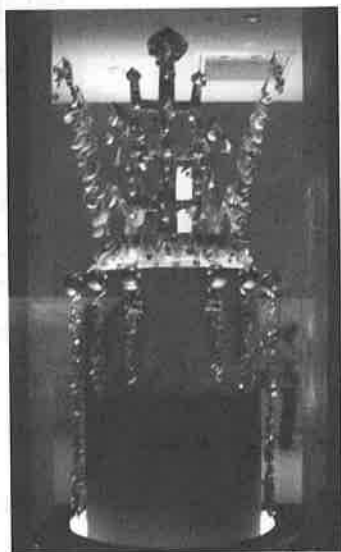
Chinese art has a penchant for the monumental and the grand, epitomized by the Great Wall, the Colossal Buddhas, and the Tomb of Shi Huangdi. Considerable attention, however, is paid to smaller items such as delicate porcelains, finely cut jade figures, and lacquered wooden objects.

PRACTICE EXERCISES

Multiple-Choice

1. The tomb of the terra-cotta warriors from the First Qin emperor of China has more than 8,000 soldiers who are
 - (A) alike to show their uniformity in protecting the emperor
 - (B) unpainted to contrast with the colorful image of the emperor more forcefully
 - (C) subtly different to show their ethnic diversity of China
 - (D) from every social class, gender, and age in China

Questions 2–4 refer to this image.



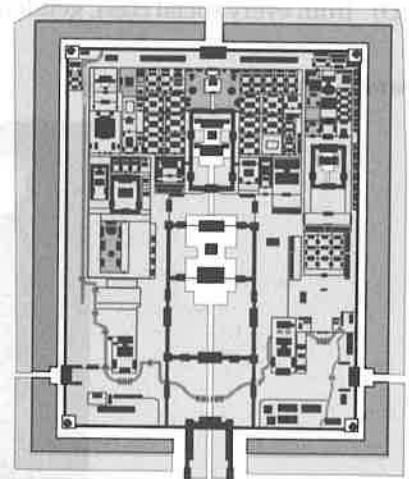
2. This Korean crown was found
 - (A) in a royal sanctuary placed with other religious objects
 - (B) on the head of a large sculpture of Buddha
 - (C) in a royal tomb buried in a mound
 - (D) in Japan, given as a diplomatic gift to the Japanese emperor
3. The crown was probably not meant to be worn because
 - (A) the gold is too precious and would have been easily stolen
 - (B) gold is a soft metal that could be easily bent if worn
 - (C) the gold applied here is extremely thin and fragile
 - (D) the whole crown was too heavy to be worn comfortably
4. The uprights probably symbolized
 - (A) a distinctive royal lineage of "family tree" that came from the gods to the wearer
 - (B) a stylized tree with antler forms that denoted spiritual power
 - (C) everlasting peace achievable through the gods and the divinely appointed emperor
 - (D) the riches of an earthly kingdom reflecting the glory of an eternal world

5. Which of the following Chinese art forms inspired contemporary artwork?

- (A) Chinese music as seen in *Horn Players*.
- (B) Chinese porcelains as seen in *Pink Panther*.
- (C) Chinese photography as seen in *Rebellious Silence*.
- (D) Chinese writing as seen in *A Book from the Sky*.

Short Essay

These images depict a view and a ground plan of the Forbidden City in Beijing, China.



What is the design of the Forbidden City based on?

Analyze how the design of the Forbidden City reflects its function.

Analyze how the design of the Forbidden City reflects the political aspirations of the Chinese royal court.

ANSWER KEY

1. **C** 2. **C** 3. **C** 4. **B** 5. **D**

ANSWERS EXPLAINED

Multiple-Choice

1. **(C)** Each of the figures is subtly different to depict various ethnic features in different regions of China. There are no women, or old or young people.
2. **(C)** The crown was found in a tumulus, or burial mound.
3. **(C)** The gold is extremely thin and very fragile; it was meant only for limited occasions or mostly likely burial.

4. **(B)** The uprights symbolize a stylized tree reaching up to the sky. They have connections with spiritual forces.
5. **(D)** Xu Bing's *Book from the Sky* contains references to traditional Chinese art, bookmaking, and calligraphy, although much of the calligraphy is made up.

Short-Essay Rubric

| Question | Points | Key Points in a Good Response |
|---|--------|--|
| What is the design of the Forbidden City based on? | 1 | The traditional court-style residence in Chinese architecture |
| Analyze how the design of the Forbidden City reflects its function. | 2 | <p>Answers could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Walls 30 feet high to keep people out and those inside in ■ Forbidden City so-called because only the royal court could enter ■ Each corner of the rectangular plan has a tower representing the four corners of the world. ■ Focus is the Hall of Supreme Harmony, the throne room and seat of power; wood structure made with elaborately painted beams; meant for grand ceremonies ■ Yellow tile roofs and red painted wooden beams placed on marble foundations unify the structures in the Forbidden City into an artistic whole. |
| Analyze how the design of the Forbidden City reflects the political aspirations of the Chinese royal court. | 2 | <p>Answers could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Emperor and his court saw themselves as divine monarchs; the Forbidden City is a miniature celestial world. ■ They sought grandeur and a lavish lifestyle to project an image of power and wealth. ■ The Chinese court projected an image of being removed from the world, remote, unattainable; the Forbidden City had huge walls to keep people out. |

Japanese Art

25

TIME PERIOD: 1789–1848

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING: Asian art is a reflection of Asian aesthetics.

Essential Knowledge:

- Japanese art is characterized by its influence from Shintoism and Zen philosophy.
- Calligraphy is a central art form in Japanese art.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING: Asian art spreads throughout the world through trade.

Essential Knowledge:

- Asian art shows evidence of the interconnectivity of regional schools with the wider world.
- Asian art, particularly Japanese prints, heavily influenced the art of Europe.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Japan is one of the few countries in the world that has never been successfully invaded by an outside army. There are those who have tried, like the Mongols in 1281, whose fleet was destroyed by a typhoon called a kamikaze, or divine wind, and there are those who have defeated the Japanese without invading, like the Allies in World War II, who never landed a force on the four principal islands, until the war was over.

Because of the relatively sheltered nature of the Japanese archipelago, and the infrequency of foreign interference, Japan has a greater proportion of its traditional artistic patrimony than almost any other country in the world. It was Commodore Perry who opened Japan, to outside influence in 1854. One by-product of Perry's intervention was the shipment of **ukiyo-e** prints to European markets, first as packing material and then in their own right. They achieved enduring fame in nineteenth-century Europe and America, but were looked down upon by the upper classes in Japan, who were more than willing to send them off for export.

Patronage and Artistic Life

Japanese artists worked on commission, some for the royal court, others in the service of religion. Masters ran workshops with a range of assistants—the tradition in Japan usually marking this as a family-run business with the eldest son inheriting the trade. Assistants learned from the ground up, making paper and ink, for example. The master created the composition by brushing in key outlines and his assistants worked on the colors and details.

Painting is highly esteemed in Japan. Aristocrats of both sexes not only learned to paint, but became distinguished in the art form.

ZEN BUDDHISM

Zen is a school of Buddhism that is deeply rooted in all East Asian societies, and was imported from China in the late twelfth century. It had a particularly great impact on the art of Japan, where the Zen philosophy was warmly embraced.

Zen adherents reject worldliness, the collection of goods for their own sake, and physical adornment. Instead, the Zen world is centered on austerity, self-control, courage, and loyalty. Meditation is key to enlightenment; for example, samurai warriors reach deeply into themselves to perform acts of bravery and great physical endurance.

Zen teaches through intuition and introspection, rather than through books and scripture. Warriors as well as artists were quick to adopt a Zen philosophy.

THE JAPANESE TEA CEREMONY

The tea ceremony is a ritual of greater importance than it at first seems to the Westerner. The simple details, the crude vessels, the refined tea, the uncomplicated gestures—these alluring items are all part of a seemingly casual, but in fact, highly sophisticated tea ceremony that endures because of its minimalism. Teahouses have bamboo and wooden walls with floor mats of woven straw. Everything is carefully arranged to give the sense of straightforwardness and delicacy.

Visitors enter through a low doorway—symbolizing their humbleness—into a private setting. Rectangular spaces are broken by an unadorned alcove that houses a Zen painting done in a free and monochromatic style, selected to enhance an intimate atmosphere of warm and dark spaces.

Participants sit on the floor in a small space usually designed for about five people, and drink tea. The ceremony requires four principles: Purity, harmony, respect, and tranquility. All elements of the ceremony are proscribed, even the purification ritual of hand washing and the types of conversation allowed.

JAPANESE ARCHITECTURE AND SCULPTURE

The austerity of Zen philosophy can be most readily seen in the simplicity of architectural design that dominates Japanese buildings. A traditional structure is usually a single story, made of wood, and meant to harmonize with its natural environment. The wood is typically undressed—the fine grains appreciated by the Japanese. Because wood is relatively light, the pillars could be placed at wide intervals to support the roof, opening the interior most dramatically to the outdoors.

Floors are raised above the ground to reduce humidity by allowing the air to circulate under the building. Eaves are long to generate shady interiors in the summer, and steeply pitched to allow the quick runoff of rain and snow.

Interiors have mobile spaces created by sliding screens, which act as room dividers, by changing its dimensions at will. Particularly lavish homes may have gilded screens, but most are of wooden materials. The floors are overlaid with removable straw mats.

A principal innovation in Japanese design is the Zen garden, which features meticulous arrangements of raked sand circling around prominently placed stones and plants (Figure 25.2b). Each garden suggests wider vistas and elaborate landscapes. Zen gardens contain no water, but the careful placement of rocks often suggests a cascade or a rushing stream.

Ultimately these gardens serve for spiritual refreshment, a place of contemplation and rejuvenation.

There is a deep respect for the natural world in Japanese thought. The native religion, Shintoism, believes in the sacredness of spirits inherent in nature. In a heavily forested and rocky terrained country like Japan, wood becomes the natural choice for building, and stone for Zen gardens.

Todai-ji, Nara, Japan

Todai-ji, 743, rebuilt c. 1700, wood with ceramic tile roofing, Nara, Japan (Figure 25.1a)

- Great Eastern Temple, refers to its location on the eastern edge of the city of Nara, Japan
- Noted for its colossal sculpture of seated image of the Vairocana Buddha
- Temple and Buddha have been razed several times during military unrest
- Seven external bays on façade
- Influenced by monumental Chinese sculptures (cf. Longmen)
- Largest wooden building in the world



Figure 25.1a: Todai-ji, 743, rebuilt c. 1700, wood with ceramic tile roofing, Nara, Japan

Great Buddha, base eighth century, upper portion including head twelfth century, copper (Figure 25.1b)

- Monumental feat of casting
- Emperor Shōmu embraced Buddhism and erected sculpture as a way of stabilizing Japanese population during a time of economic crisis
- Largest metal statue of Buddha in the world
- Mudra: right hand means “do not fear”; left hand means “welcome”
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Images of Buddha Across Asia**
 - Bamiyan Buddha (Figure 23.2)
 - Jowo Rinpoche (Figure 23.3)
 - Longmen Caves (Figures 24.9a, 24.9b, 24.9c)



Figure 25.1b: Todai-ji, 743, rebuilt c. 1700, wood with ceramic tile roofing, Nara, Japan

Nio Guardian Figures, c. 1203, wood, by Unkei, Tankei, and Jokahu (Figures 25.1c and 25.1d)

- One on either side of the gate
- Complex joined woodblock construction
- Intricate swirling drapery
- Fierce forbidding looks and gestures
- Masculine, frightening figures that protect the Buddha



Figure 25.1c: Nio Guardian Figure, c. 1203, wood, by Unkei, Tankei, and Jokahu



Figure 25.1d: Nio Guardian Figure, c. 1203, wood, by Unkei, Tankei, and Jokahu



Figure 25.1e: Great South Gate, 1181–1203, wood with ceramic tile roofing



Figure 25.2a: Ryoan-ji, c. 1480, current design eighteenth century, wet garden, Kyoto, Japan



Figure 25.2b: Ryoan-ji, dry garden

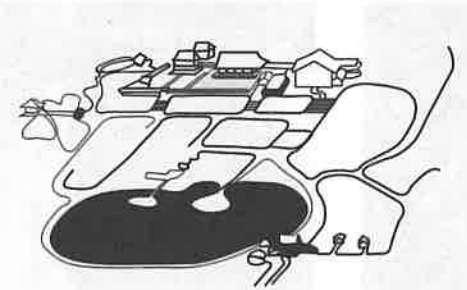


Figure 25.2c: Ryoan-ji, plan

Great South Gate, 1181–1203, wood with ceramic tile roofing (Figure 25.1e)

- Nandaimon: great south gate, with five bays, three central bays for passing, and two outer that are closed
- Two stories are same size; unusual in Japanese architecture (usually upper story is smaller)
- Deep eaves supported by the six-stepped bracket complex, which rise in tiers with no bracketed arms
- Roof supported by huge pillars
- Unusual in that it has no ceiling; roof is exposed from below
- Overall effect is of proportion and stateliness
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Entrances**
 - Great Portal, Chartres (Figure 12.6)
 - North Gate of the Great Stupa (Figure 23.4c)
 - Front Gate of the Forbidden City (Figure 24.2b)

Ryoan-ji, c. 1480, current design eighteenth century, rock garden, Kyoto, Japan (Figures 25.2a, 25.2b, 25.2c)

- Garden as a microcosm of nature
- Zen dry garden:
 - Gravel acts as water; gravel raked in wavy patterns
 - Rocks are mountain ranges
 - Meant to be viewed from a veranda in a nearby building
 - Fifteen rocks arranged in three groups
 - Interpreted as islands in a floating sea; mountain peaks above clouds; constellations in the sky
 - From no viewpoint is the entire garden viewable at once
 - Served as a focus for meditation
 - Asymmetrical arrangement
 - Bounded on two sides by a low, yellow wall
- Wet Garden:
 - Contains a tea house
 - Seemingly arbitrary in placement, the plants are actually placed in a highly organized and structured environment symbolizing the natural world
 - Water symbolizes purification; used in rituals
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: People and Nature**
 - Weiwei, *Sunflower Seeds* (Figure 29.27)
 - Velasco, *Valley of Mexico* (Figure 21.4)
 - Turner, *The Slave Ship* (Figure 20.5)

JAPANESE PAINTING AND PRINTMAKING

Chinese painting techniques and formats were popular in Japan as well, so it is common to see the Japanese as masters of the handscroll, the hanging scroll, and the decorative screen.

Characteristics of the Japanese style include elevated viewpoints, diagonal lines, and depersonalized faces.

A Japanese specialty is **haboku** or **ink-splashed** painting that involved applying in a free and open style that gives the illusion of being splashed on the surface. The preponderance of Chinese imagery and painting techniques caused a reaction in Japan, as artists and patrons sought to find a national voice, independent of other Asian traditions. **Yamato-e**, developed in the twelfth century, features tales from Japanese history and literature depicted usually in long narrative scrolls. There is a depersonalization of figures in yamato-e works, often with just a line to indicate the eyes and mouth, and many times the nose is missing or just suggested. Strong diagonals dominate compositions that feature buildings with their roofs missing so we can see inside. Clouds are used to divide compositions into sections so they become more manageable to the viewer.

Genre painting from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries was dominated by **ukiyo-e**, a term that means "pictures of the floating world." The word "floating" is meant in the Buddhist sense of the passing or transient nature of life; therefore ukiyo-e works depict scenes of everyday life or pleasure: festivals, theatre (i.e., the kabuki), domestic life, geishas, brothels, and so on. Ukiyo-e is most famously represented in woodblock prints, although it can be found on scrolls and painted screens.

Ukiyo-e was immensely popular; millions of prints were sold to the middle class during its heyday, usually put between 1658 and 1858. Although disdained by the Japanese upper classes for being popular, they won particular affection in Europe and in the Americas as an example of innovative Japanese art.

Printmaking was a collaborative process between the artist and the publisher. The publisher determined the market, dictated the subject matter and style, and employed the woodblock carver and the printer. At first, all prints were in black and white, but the popularity encouraged experimentation, and a two-color system was introduced in 1741.

By 1765, a polychrome print was created, and while this made the product more time-consuming to create and therefore more expensive, it was wildly popular and sold enthusiastically. Colors are subtle and delicate, and separated by black lines. Each color was applied one at a time, requiring a separate step in the printmaking process. This made the steps complicated with precise alignments critical to a successful print. Suzuki Harunobu was the first successful ukiyo-e artist in the polychrome tradition. **Hokusai** explored the relationship of ukiyo-e and landscape painting.

Western artists were taken with ukiyo-e prints. They particularly enjoyed the flat areas of color, the largely unmodulated tones, the lack of shadows, and the odd compositional angles, with figures occasionally seen from behind. Forms are often unexpectedly cut off and cropped by the frame of the work. The Western interest in realistic subject matter found agreement in ukiyo-e prints.



Figure 25.3a: *Night Attack on the Sanjō Palace*, c. 1250–1300, handscroll (ink and color on paper), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figure 25.3b: *Night Attack on the Sanjō Palace*, detail

***Night Attack on the Sanjō Palace*, c. 1250–1300, Handscroll (ink and color on paper), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Figures 25.3a and 25.3b)**

- Painted 100 years after the civil war depicted in the scene
- Elevated viewpoint
- Strong diagonals emphasizing movement and action
- Swift active brushstrokes
- Narratives read from right to left as the scroll is unrolled
- Depersonalized figures, many with only one stroke for the eyes, ears, and mouth
- Tangled mass of forms accentuated by Japanese armor
- Lone archer leads the escape from the burning palace with equestrian Japanese commander behind him
- Military rule in Japan from 1185 on had an interest in the code of the warrior; reflected in the large quantity of war-related literature and paintings
- Unrolls like a film sequence; as one unrolls, time advances
- Burning of the imperial palace at Sanjō in Kyoto as rebel forces try to seize power by capturing the emperor

- Coup staged in 1159 as Emperor Go-Shirakawa is taken prisoner
- Imperial palace in flames; rebels force the emperor to board a cart waiting to take him into captivity
- Rebels kill those opposed and place their heads on sticks and parade them as trophies
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Historical Events**
 - Lin, Vietnam Veterans Memorial (Figures 29.4a, 29.4b)
 - Goya, *And There's Nothing to Be Done* (Figure 20.2)
 - Column of Trajan (Figure 6.16)



Figures 25.4a and 25.4b: Ogata Korin, *White and Red Plum Blossoms*, 1710–1716, watercolor on paper, MOA Museum of Art, Atami, Japan

Ogata Korin, *White and Red Plum Blossoms*, 1710–1716, watercolor on paper, MOA Museum of Art, Atami, Japan (Figures 25.4a and 25.4b)

- Japanese rinpa style named for Ogata (*Rin* for “Ko-rin” and *pa* meaning “school”)
- Influenced by the yamato-e style of painting
- Stream cuts rhythmically through the scene; swirls in paint surface indicate water currents
- White plum blossoms on left; red on right
- Tarashikomi technique in which paint is applied to a surface that has not already dried from a previous application; creates a dripping effect useful in depicting streams or flowers

■ **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Multi-Panel Paintings**

- Campin (?), *Annunciation Triptych* (Figure 14.1)
- Grünewald, *Isenheim Altarpiece* (Figures 14.4a, 14.4b)
- Circle of the Gonzalez Family, *Screen with the Siege of Belgrade and Hunting Scene* (Figures 18.3a, 18.3b)

Hokusai, *Under the Wave off Kanagawa* (*Kanagawa oki nami ura*), called “The Great Wave,” from “Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji,” 1830–1833, polychrome woodblock print; ink and color on paper, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Figure 25.5)

- First time landscape is a major theme in Japanese prints
- Last of a series of prints called *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*
- Personification of nature, it seems intent on drowning the figures in boats
- Mount Fuji, sacred mountain to the Japanese, seems to be one of the waves
- Striking design contrasts water and sky with large areas of negative space
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Images of the Sea and Water**
 - Michelangelo, *The Flood* (Figure 16.2c)
 - Turner, *The Slave Ship* (Figure 20.5)
 - Kusama, *Narcissus Garden* (Figures 22.25a, 22.25b)



Figure 25.5: Hokusai, *Under the Wave off Kanagawa* (*Kanagawa oki nami ura*), called “The Great Wave,” from “Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji,” 1830–1833, polychrome woodblock print, ink and color on paper, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

VOCABULARY

Genre painting: painting in which scenes of everyday life are depicted

Haboku (splashed ink): a monochrome Japanese ink painting done in a free style in which ink seems to be splashed on a surface

Kondo: a hall used for Buddhist teachings (Figure 25.1a)

Mandorla (Italian, meaning “almond”): a term that describes a large almond-shaped orb around holy figures like Christ and Buddha (Figure 25.1b)

Tarashikomi: a Japanese painting technique in which paint is applied to a surface that has not already dried from a previous application

Ukiyo-e: translated as “pictures of the floating world,” a Japanese genre painting popular from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century (Figure 25.5)

Yamato-e: a style of Japanese painting that is characterized by native subject matter, stylized features, and thick bright pigments

Zen: a metaphysical branch of Buddhism that teaches fulfillment through self-discipline and intuition

SUMMARY

With much of its tradition intact, a firm history of Japanese artistic production can be studied from its earliest roots. Sculptures often survive in their original architectural settings.

The Japanese are particularly sensitive to the properties of wood construction. The earliest buildings maintain the beauty of untreated wood and show a great emphasis on harmonizing with the natural surrounding environment. Japanese buildings are meant to be viewed as part of an overall balance in nature. Japanese buildings never intrude upon a setting, but complement it fully.

Traditional Chinese forms of painting, such as scrolls, were admired in Japan. Nevertheless, uniquely Japanese artistic styles, such as ukiyo-e prints, were popular as well, particularly with the middle classes. The impact of ukiyo-e prints on nineteenth-century European art cannot be overstated.

PRACTICE EXERCISES

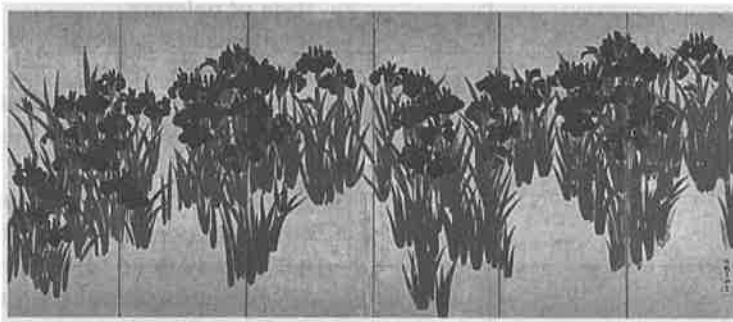
Multiple-Choice

1. The Nio Guardian Figures and the *Lamassu* from the Assyrian culture have in common that they are both
 - (A) meant to symbolically protect the areas behind them
 - (B) combinations of human and animal forms
 - (C) made of stone and symbolize permanence
 - (D) carved with the image of the ruler on their faces
2. The Great Buddha in Todai-ji's Great East Temple was probably influenced by similar works, such as
 - (A) the Terra-Cotta Warriors
 - (B) Longmen Caves
 - (C) Angkor Wat
 - (D) the Great Stupa
3. Japanese woodblock prints can be seen as directly influencing works like Mary Cassatt's *The Coiffure* in that they both
 - (A) share an affinity for brilliant coloring
 - (B) place figures at odd angles to the picture plane
 - (C) are concerned with solid modeling and massing of forms
 - (D) use the conventional three-dimensional linear perspective
4. The yamato-e technique is characterized by all of the following EXCEPT
 - (A) the artists used stories from Japanese history and literature
 - (B) the figures are depersonalized with just one stroke for facial details
 - (C) compositions are dominated by diagonals
 - (D) the artists were the first in Japan to specialize in the Western oil painting technique

5. Dry landscape gardens in Japanese art carry great symbolic value. The viewer was meant to
- (A) arrange the rocks and the sand in an artful display to suggest a real landscape
 - (B) sit directly in the center of the garden and meditate on the natural environment
 - (C) use the garden as a place to refresh the spirit by painting, writing poetry, or composing music
 - (D) be refreshed through reflection, contemplation, and meditation

Short Essay

Attribute this painting to the artist who painted it.



Identify a work by the same artist in the art history curriculum.

Using specific details, justify your attribution by comparing the two works.

How do both works demonstrate the Japanese view of landscape?

ANSWER KEY

1. **A** 2. **B** 3. **B** 4. **D** 5. **D**

ANSWERS EXPLAINED

Multiple-Choice

1. **(A)** Both the Nio Guardian Figures and the *Lamassu* are images at gateways, which act to shield the areas behind them.
2. **(B)** The grandeur of the Great Buddha in Todai-ji's Great East Temple is equal to the great Buddha statues at the Longmen Caves.
3. **(B)** Mary Cassatt's compositions were influenced by the unusual compositional angles seen in many Japanese woodblock prints.
4. **(D)** Yamato-e is more about Japanese history and literature depicted with diagonal compositions and depersonalized faces than about oil paint. Yamato-e was developed in Japan in the twelfth century, well before European contact.

5. **(D)** Viewers never entered a Japanese dry garden. They were enclosed environments meant for reflection, contemplation, and meditation.

Short-Essay Rubric

| Question | Points | Key Points in a Good Response |
|--|--------|---|
| Attribute this painting to the artist who painted it. | 1 | Ogata Korin |
| Identify a work by the same artist in the art history curriculum. | 1 | Ogata Korin, <i>White and Red Plum Blossoms</i> , 1710–1716, watercolor on paper |
| Using specific details, justify your attribution by comparing the two works. | 2 | <p>Answers could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Diagonals influenced by the yamato-e style of painting ■ Rhythmic composition ■ Painted on a screen ■ View limited to a few details that are carefully painted rather than grand landscapes ■ Tarashikomi technique in which paint is applied to a surface that has not already dried from a previous application; creates a dripping effect useful in depicting streams or flowers |
| By examining both works, discuss what aspects of landscape painting the artist was most interested in. | 1 | <p>Answers could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Concentration of a few details ■ Deeply personal view of nature ■ Emphasis on a fragile, tender, and gentle nature—rather than awesome, threatening, or overwhelming ■ Organizes natural forms into patterned compositions |