Japanese Art History
- Pre-history: 5,000 BC to 710 AD, Jomon, Yayoi, Kofun
- Nara & Asuka: 552 - 794
- * Heian: 794 - 1185
- * Kamakura: 1185 - 1333
- * Muromachi: 1392 - 1573
- Momoyama: 1573 - 1615
- Edo: 1615 - 1868
- Meiji: 1868 - 1911
- Modern: 1911 - Present, Taisho, Showa, Heisei

Major Characteristics of Japanese Art
- Reverence for nature and awareness of the seasons from the native Shinto religion.
- Influenced at key points by the art, architecture and religions of other cultures.
- During periods of isolation, adapted foreign influences into arts to develop a unique aesthetic based on Japanese values
- Developed one of the first popular culture artistic traditions

Heian 794 – 1185
- Politics 794 - 951: Emperor Kanmu distributed the aza (smaller political divisions) to aristocratic families
- Politics 951 – 1086: Fujiwara family became most powerful by marrying into the imperial family
- Politics 1086 – 1185: Imperial family wrested wealth and power back from Fujiwara through bribes
- Economics 951 – 1086: A time of peace and prosperity, culture flourished in the imperial court

Heian 794 – 1185
- Religion 794 - 951: Buddhism lost some of its influence over social and political life.
- Religion 951 – 1086: Esoteric cults developed based on complex rituals; savior cults spread to the common people.
- Religion: 1086 – 1185 Many temples founded, to gain merit in this life and the next
Heian 794 – 1185
- Artistic 951 – 1086: Aristocrats had time and money to pursue the arts. Court women devoted themselves to writing
- Artistic 794 – 951: Japanese looked inward at their own artistic achievements and revived old styles and techniques
- Artistic 1086 – 1185: Handscrolls became a major art form, i.e. The Tale of Genji. Women remain devoted to painting

International 794 – 951: the Japanese felt they had surpassed the Chinese; broke off embassies in 894. The Tang dynasty, riddled with corruption, collapsed in 904.
International 951 – 1085: Very little contact with the other cultures, China or Korea.
Ninnaji Temple Gardens
Edo Period
Scan: Gardens in Kyoto

Heian Imperial Palace
Web: Asian Historical Architecture

Portrait of the Poetess Saigo Nyogo Yoshiko (929-985)
Late 12th/13th century, 11 x 20 inches
Freer Gallery of Art

Poem by Saigo Nyogo Yoshiko from the portrait

~With the sound of the koto
The wind in the pines of the mountain peak
Seems to communicate.
With which notes shall I begin?

Hiragana on left - Japanese
Kanji on right - Chinese

Tale of Genji Handscroll
- The Tale of Genji is the first novel in the world, written by Lady Murasaki Shikibu of the imperial court about 1025 AD.
- Much of Japanese literature and even film today is based on themes from The Tale of Genji.
- The handscroll was created by five teams: calligraphers, artists and colorists.
- Theme One: the pathos of things, difficult to express, used blown off roof, odd angles and presence or absence of space.
- Theme Two: Genji’s karma, each action is a result of previous actions and affects future actions.

Genji Monogatari (Tale of Genji)
1/2nd 12th century
Tokugawa Art Museum, Nagoya
Buddhist Temple Architecture

- Temple architecture was based on the shinden style of architecture of aristocrats' mansions – arranged around gardens and pond.
- Byodoin (Phoenix Hall) Temple is an excellent example of the shinden temple style.
- Byodoin (Phoenix Hall) portrays the descent of Amida Buddha to welcome the deceased to paradise. It is the Western Paradise in architectural reality.
Politics: this is the era of the samurai who ruled the country in the name of the emperor.

Politics: the samurai created the bakufu bureaucracy which oversaw all political powers - taxes and spending - between warring periods.

Religion: Zen Buddhism promoted a quieter, austere aesthetic and their philosophy shaped the intellectual and aesthetic life of the samurai.

Religion: Zen monks became cultural advisors to the shogun and samurai.

Economics: Prosperity (between the civil wars) brought a flowering of the arts and the shogun and samurai were major patrons of the arts.

Economics: in the 16th century, the merchants gained wealth and power and became patrons of the arts.

Social: courtiers, monks and crafts persons were respected as artists.

Social: castle towns grew and a vibrant urban culture developed.

Artistic: Civil wars forced many artists and craft persons to flee Kyoto and seek refuge in provincial capitals, spreading the teaching of artistic skills and aesthetic tastes.

Artistic: Zen monks developed a new, simpler style of painting based on calligraphy and the expressiveness of ink and brush.

International: Japan and China began trading again in the 13th century; the aesthetic of the Song Dynasty - sober, austere, and introspective - became influential.

International: Japanese monk artists traveled to China for study for both spiritual and artistic growth.
Full Suit of Armor
1578, Iron lames with silk tapes, brocades and other materials
Metropolitan Museum of Art

Hosoi Armor
Early 14th century
Lacquered iron and leather, stenciled leather, silk, copper-gilt
H: 37 inches, Wt: 38 lb.
Metropolitan Museum of Art

Himeji Castle, built 1601 – 1609
Photo: H. Rindsberg

Himeji Castle, interior
Built 1601 – 1609
Scanned: Arts of Japan

Nijo Castle
Kyoto, c. 1625
Scanned: Arts of Japan
Gibbons, Sesson Shukei (1504-1589)
Pair of six-panel screens, ink on paper
Each 62 x 137 inches
Metropolitan Museum of Art

Gibbons (Detail), Sesson Shukei (1504-1589), ink on paper
Pair of six-panel screens
Each 62 x 137 inches
Metropolitan Museum of Art

No Mask
For a demon

Noh Actor and Musicians On Stage
Contemporary Noh Performance
Scanned Image
No Robe Choken, 18th – 19th century
Gauze weave silk with gold leaf on paper
Freer & Sackler Galleries

Ryoanji Temple, Established 1500
Photo: H. Rindsberg

Wabi Tea Ceremony
- includes the appreciation of Japanese architecture, gardening, ceramics, calligraphy, history and religion
- is arranged for a specific occasion; time of day and season match the event; a ceremony at dawn may be for a friend starting a new job

Wabi Tea Ceremony Aesthetics
- harmony with people and nature
- respect for other
- purity of heart and mind
- tranquility

Aesthetics of the Tea Ceremony
- Sight: the path through the garden and the artwork in the tokonoma
- Smell: the fresh scents in the garden, fragrant wood in the fire, incense and the sharp smell of the tea itself
- Taste: the fresh cool water as the guests rinse their mouths (cleansing the physically and spiritually); the sweet contrasts with the astringent taste of the tea
- Sound: the sounds in the garden and the water heating in the tea kettle
- Touch: the warmth, weight and texture of the tea bowl in your hand

Teahouse in Suizenji Temple
Established 17th century
Photo: H. Rindsberg
End Art of Japan 2

Replica of Sai-an Tea House From Daitokuji, Kyoto
Minneapolis Institute of Art

Newly brewed matcha tea
Web image

Tea Bowl with Design of a Mountain Retreat
Mid-18th century
Ceramic, H: 3 inches
Freer & Sackler Galleries

Poem:
In tranquility, the universe is great.

This ends our presentation on the Art of Japan Part Two.