

# Brief Tour Planning Worksheet for Group Tour

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## INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to Mia. I look forward to touring with your group today. It is important to keep at least one foot away from all the art objects.

The theme for our tour today is **Art Reflects the culture: Ancients Ideals of Wabi Sabi.**

Wabi Sabi represents the Japanese concept, aesthetic, and a world view.

Put simply it emphasizes beauty in imperfection and accepting the natural cycle of growth and decay. Wabi Sabi occupies roughly the same position in Japanese aesthetic values as the Greek ideals of beauty and perfection do in the West.

Wabi reflects rusticity and an appreciation of simplicity and austerity (asymmetry in a ceramic bowl reflecting handmade craftsmanship as opposed to another bowl that is perfect, but without a soul). Sabi is value found in the old and weathered, suggesting the tranquility of old age, such as the patina on a very old bronze. It can be traced back to Shinto and the Zen Buddhist monasteries leading art forward focusing on the natural, the impermanent and imperfect.

We will together look for, discuss and learn about Wabi Sabi attributes in the art objects we will see today. Let's begin our journey outside an imaginary Buddhist temple.

**ORGANIZATION:** (Order your 6-8 objects into a logical tour route, both spatially and thematically. Keep in mind the overall theme and think about connections between objects that will facilitate transitions.)

1. Vajra Warrior
2. Ceremonial Wash basin
3. Welcoming Descent of the Amida Buddha (hanging scroll)
4. Bonten
5. Early Spring
6. Sake Cask in the Shape of a Drum
7. Burst-bag-type freshwater Jar

Alternate #1 \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate #2 \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b>Transitions:</b> (1-2 sentences that make a smooth transition between one object and the next, allowing your audience to make connections and follow the tour more easily.)</p>
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*Transition between 1 and 2:*

The old and weathered surfaces on these ancient Japanese guardians suggest their role as valued guardians outside the Buddhist temple. Next, we'll explore the wabi sabi characteristics of an object that would be located inside the entrance to the temple.

*Transition between 2 and 3:*

So for the Japanese, the worn surface of this lacquer wash basin enhances its value as it reflects centuries of use in purification rituals. We'll next see this value of the imperfect and transient nature of life in the form of a Buddhist scroll.

*Transition between 3 and 4:*

We've just learned from examining this Buddhist hanging scroll how wabi sabi is ingrained in Japanese culture and the art itself. Next we will see another physical embodiment of wabi sabi, but this one is in an ancient sculpture.

*Transition between 4 and 5:*

In this 10<sup>th</sup> century sculpture of Bonten, we've glimpsed how the Japanese value transience and imperfection in the natural world. Next we will see how calligraphy, painting, and poetry provide a unified vision of the wabi sabi aesthetic.

*Transition between 5 and 6:*

Now we move from this early spring landscape of the mind that captures the values of wabi sabi, to look at twin objects that reflect those same values, but in a much more utilitarian form.

*Transition between 6 and 7:*

We saw the ideals of wabi sabi in these beautiful sake vessels with their minimalist form and worn finish. Now we will view a clay ceremonial vessel that also reveals those ideals, but with a much more untamed aesthetic.

## **CONCLUSION:**

In conclusion, we have looked at and touched (at least in our heads) different ideas of art from the Japanese/Korean cultures. We have seen Wabi-Sabi aesthetics in poems/paintings/scrolls and blurred between sacred and secular ideas. It is manifested in religion - (Pure Land Buddhism) in culture and the art of Japan. The impermanent of the medium and the social connection. Forms are simple and elegant as well as functional were seen in the ceremonial Wash Basin. The sculpture of Bonten represent the ideas of Japanese aesthetics and beauty with Buddhist philosophy that everything is impermanent, incomplete and imperfect. This concept was also demonstrated in the Burst bag freshwater jug. However, the Sake Casks also embody the aesthetic of wabi-sabi with their clean lines, simplicity and patina that exhibit a useful and well appreciated life.

Thank you for being part of this tour and please come back again to walk through these galleries and in particular to get a better understanding of the Japanese/Korean art. There is so much to see that we have only lightly touched upon it. We look forward to seeing you again as you are always welcome at MIA.