

Andrea Masey

JANP 215: Cool Japan

March 11, 2015

1) According to the lecture notes and the assigned readings, there was many art forms that reflect the Japanese aesthetics and values. These can be found in concepts such as the moon and the rain and tea ceremonies. To begin with, the concepts of the moon and rain can be seen in a wide variety of the traditional art forms, such as literature, poems, folk tales and paintings. This shows that they were regarded highly because of their importance and the influenced they had over the different art forms.

The values and aesthetics ideas that come of the rain and the moon are plentiful. They both can symbolize the changing of the seasons, time or life. These aesthetic value that can be seen as appreciation towards things that do not last forever. This concept is one of several main aesthetic ideas of Japanese culture. Being able to anticipate the beginning of the rain or the new cycle of the moon, then appreciating it in the moment and then after it has pasted. Since both the rain and the moon bring out these ideas and also can symbolized beyond what they are, it is easy to understand how this appreciation can be applied to changing seasons or time or even life.

Another way that these two concepts can be considered aesthetic values is because of the level of respect that can be seen for them. For each concept, Japan has given them many different terms to describe the subtle differences that can be seen or felt. According to the lecture rain has over 200 different terms, but not all Japanese people know all the ways to address them. However, the fact that over Japan's history, much consideration has been taken to analyze and appreciate the minute changes shows how much Japan values both the rain and the moon.

Looking at the concept of tea ceremony, one can also find aesthetic values and ideas. One main aesthetic of the tea ceremony is fact that it is a "*do*" shows that it is taken seriously to the point where people want to master it and there is a refinedness to make it an art. The point in trying to master the way of the tea, is to reach spiritual enlighten. The concept of *wabi-sabi*,

plays an important part in the tea ceremony because it can found in elements and items throughout the tea ceremony. Being able to understand at least a basic idea of *wabi-sabi* can bring a greater sense of appreciation to the whole production.

Another important idea of the tea ceremony is *Wa Kei Sei Kyaku*, which means harmony, respect, purity and tranquility. According to the lecture, these terms are the heart of the tea ceremony and meant to bring people closer together under a greater sense equality and peace. This is interesting to see because it tells a great deal about the values system. Having guest take on a sense of humility through certain actions, which can dissolve social ranks, is a very humbling value. In other cultures, removing any sign of one's statue is not willing done, so valuing the ability in a person to be able humbly remove their rank in order to reach a spiritual level with other people participating in the tea ceremony is unique concept.

Japanese aesthetic and value systems influences many forms of art in Japan. What people understand and appreciate concepts about tea ceremonies or the meaning behind the moon and rain shows what is really important about these concepts.

2) In recent years, there has been striving to rejuvenate certain aspects of Japan, some of the projects are ukiyo-e paintings, the robot culture and planetariums. One impressive project is trying to revive both an art and an old neighborhood. In Nihonbashi an attempt to make the area more appealing to the younger generation, murals of famous ukiyo-e were painted on stores' shutters. This is a brilliant way to clean up an area while bring culture and history into it as well. This project just goes to show the importance that this style of painting has on Japan's culture and especially the Nihonbashi area. Creating these murals plays a key role in the construction of identity, and reappraisal of past cultures because it visually shows the roots and the history that ukiyo-e had in Nihonbashi.

Japan has always been more advanced in technology than most countries and robots have become a strong focus to make more life-like and uses full. While this recent robot culture is not so much about recognizing the past, but it is more about establishing an identity for Japan. Japan's whole view and attitude towards robots are very different from what most countries would feel. Japan is very comfortable with integrating robots into the people's daily lives. As developments towards robots continue to move forward and become more recognized, it will become a stronger identity of modern Japan and its culture. However, Japan has a long history of "robotic" dolls, which were able to move by a series of wooden mechanisms. Despite this history, the advances made now to robots have completely modernized them making the identity modern as well.

Like the up and coming robot culture, planetariums have also begun to pop up in recent years to inspire the younger generations. When planetariums first came to Japan they were popular with only kids before interest was lost. But new technology and a strong focus to get more than children interested sparked a renewed desire to bring back interest. With this attempt to attract more people, they succeed in creating a place for people of all generations to hang out. A domino effect started, one example from the video showed young kids trying to also revive the planetarium of their own town. On both the success of the large scale and the small scale attempt, shows the renewal interest of the traditional concept of the moon and the stars but through a modern way. When it comes to establishing identity of Japan and rejuvenating traditional arts, it can be keep as it is, like with ukiyo-e, or given a modern twist, like the robots and the planetariums.

3) Since I have taken Japanese culture classes before, I have become very familiar with a lot topics that we have discussed so far. Although one topic that before I had known very little about

was the robot culture. I had always known that Japan was more advanced in the technology industry, but I had never known just how much. After seeing the *Japanology* videos about robots, I was amazed on how realistic some looked or how many different purposes and functions they had. Although many improvements have been made in the robots from Japan in recent years, I would like to see just how much more advancements they make.