

FINAL PORTFOLIO

Category I Question 1 – Historical, Social, & Cultural Influences

1) Original *Gojira* Theatrical Poster, 1954

To interpret cultural change over time, I chose to compare the original *Gojira* and this year's *Shin Gojira* theatrical posters. What immediately stands out in the original poster is the amount of text. If the poster were divided into thirds vertically, nearly two thirds is full of text. In addition, there are a number of images squeezed into the poster. Although *Gojira* is undoubtedly the primary focus, there are also smaller images in the background as well as multiple actors' faces lining the bottom edge of the poster. It is also very colorful, but the images have little to no contrast and some details are difficult to distinguish. To me, this is a very crowded poster that is drags my attention in multiple directions at once, but for someone in the 1950s, the poster probably had all the information they needed to get an idea whether or not they want to see the movie. It was also probably necessary to include so much information on a single poster because there were not as many platforms or chances to advertise movies as there are today.

2) *Shin Gojira* Theatrical Poster, 2016

In contrast, the *Shin Gojira* theatrical poster only has about a half-page of text and a single image. Once again, *Gojira* is the focus of the poster, but there is also much less competition in the design for the attention in terms of other graphic elements and the greater contrast between *Gojira* and the background. This poster is much easier to understand at a glance, with the main features being *Gojira*, the title, and the release date. I think nowadays it is necessary for theatrical posters to be understandable at a single glance because people's attention spans are much shorter in comparison to 50 years ago. Also, movies are often advertised over a wide variety of platforms—cinema previews, tv commercials, posters, social media, etc.—so as long as the main information is easily recognizable, people will repeatedly understand what movie they're seeing advertised. In addition, the information on theatrical posters nowadays is rarely ever read; most people look up any information they need online because it's easier, faster, and overall more efficient.

Category I Question 2 – Megalopolis: Sapporo

1) Railway Station Building, 1908-1952

This photo depicts a building that was used as a railway station in Sapporo from 1908 to 1952. The building is currently located in the Hokkaido Historical Village where it is now used as the main office and entrance to the outdoor museum. The artistic element of this building is the architecture design, which is known as “stick-style.” In specific, this design refers to the use of wood planks on the exterior walls that are painted a different color from the wall itself. This design became popular in Japan during the influx of Western influence in the Meiji Period, when Japan’s borders were reopened after isolation in the Edo Period. It was predominately used for trade-related buildings, so it makes sense that this style of architecture was used for a railway station in Sapporo because the city participated in a lot of trade.

2) Odori Park

This photo is an aerial view of Odori Park, which is located in central Sapporo. Historically, the idea of creating a park to divide the north and south areas of the city was conceived in 1869, but the park was not created until 1876. Originally it was used as a fire break, which was a common practice in the Edo Period to prevent fires from consuming an entire city. The park has since undergone many changes in purpose, notably being a field to farm potatoes during WWII and as a variety of sporting fields after the war. The design of the park as it appears today was only developed in the 1950s. Now, there are many monuments and structures throughout the park that celebrate Sapporo’s history and culture. In addition, many cultural festivals are held at the park throughout the year, such as a Yosakoi Soran Festival, the famous Snow Festival, and even Beer Gardens due to Hokkaido’s beer industry.

Category II Question 3 – Unique Visual Culture

1) Woman drawing manga

For this question, I decided to demonstrate how manga as an artform both reflects and shapes the unique sign designs found in Japan. Manga is very popular among all ages and genders in Japan and there are many genres to choose from. Manga is also very distinct from Western comics, especially in the overall art style. For example, the abstract backgrounds in panels, vertical placement of text, and variety of sound effects in addition to the stylization of manga characters do not match the classic Western comic book drawing style. This is why manga is distinctly Japanese and is not easily confused with Western comics.

2) Train station emergency button sign

Because the manga artform is so distinctly Japanese in addition to being so popular among Japanese people, it is also used outside the scope of storytelling as a method of teaching and advertisement. I chose this photo of a train station sign because I think it is nearly impossible to replicate in Western cultures. For such important information, the sign must be easy to understand for all viewers. Therefore by using manga, the creator must be confident that the

viewer is familiar with manga and will definitely be able to comprehend the art style. This works in Japan, where manga is popular with most of the population, but in other cultures I don't think this exact form would be a good choice. In addition, because manga is similar to a storyboard with each panel furthering the "scene," for instructions such as the action depicted in this sign, it's actually quite effective.

Category II Question 4 – Ukiyo-e

1) *Rickshaw Cart*, 2012

The theme I used for this piece was "pop-culture," which is why I selected an image of a stylized rendition of Mario Kart. *Rickshaw Cart* was actually made using the original ukiyo-e making process rather than through digital art programs to mimic the style. Some aesthetic senses depicted in this piece include the lack of 90-degree angles as well as the use of simple lines and shading to collectively make a complex artwork. Due to the fact that the design does not use perfect 90-degree angles, the piece has a very dynamic feel, which is perfect for the content; Mario Kart is a very dynamic, action-packed game. In addition, although the individual lines and colors are simple, together they paint a clear picture that is surprisingly detailed. Another thematic element that is seen in many ukiyo-e is the battle with mythical creatures.

2) *Nichiren Praying for Rain at Ryōzengasaki in Kamakura in 1271*, 1830-35

In contrast, the theme I chose for the second piece was "historical," which is why I chose a ukiyo-e that depicts an event in history. I also chose this piece because it has many aesthetic elements, such as the way rain is illustrated and the contrast between solid and shaded areas in the design. From the dark shading at the top of the piece and the straight, thick lines for the rain, we can tell that the weather was gloomy, heavy rain rather than windy or light rain. In addition, although the dark shading is only at the top of the piece, it still conveys the sense that the entire sky was likely black due to the storm. By leaving the background clear rather than dark, the horizon line is clearly visible and the other details are not obscured. The use of solid color for the main characters and the shaded color for background figures is another aesthetic sense. Because the solid colors stand out, the viewer's eye is drawn to the main elements of the design first before viewing the background.

Category III Question 5 – Pre-Modern & Contemporary: Values

1) Ukiyo-e titled *Geisha Itsutomi*

I chose to compare pre-modern and contemporary values through visual resources about the appreciated fashion of the time. I chose the ukiyo-e of a geisha because it includes many of the desirable fashion values of the time. For example, light skin color, small lips, layered kimono, and mismatched designs. Geisha are also entertainers in addition to being fashionable,

so the inclusion of the shamisen instrument at her feet refers to her profession. In contrast, the depictions of fashion values in the contemporary photo do not refer to profession as directly. This too may be in part due to the more or less standardized geisha appearance, whereas contemporary fashion is too varied to cover in its entirety.

2) Harajuku Street Fashion

Contemporary fashion values are much more varied and complex. Perhaps this has to do with the speed of communication in the modern world, which allows swift influence of fashion values from other cultures and the near immediate spread of currently evolving fashion trends. I chose this image of three women in “Harajuku Street Fashion” because they each depict a variety of fashion values. Although each of them differ in their amount of layers, makeup, and accessories, some common themes are the height-enhancing footwear and the lack of revealing clothing (which may be due to weather, but is just as likely a cultural norm).

Category III Question 6 – Traditional & Contemporary Japan

1) Nisanzaka, Kyoto

When I think of “traditional Japan,” images from historical dramas and samurai films come to mind. In specific, I think of the old-style shops and narrow roads populated by kimono-wearing townsfolk in the background setting of the dramas. This is why I chose a photo of Nisanzaka in Kyoto. Although this is not an actual image of an old-time street, it is located in an area of historical Kyoto that was remodeled to hide evidence of modern conveniences such as utility fixtures and electrical wires. In addition, it is popular for tourists to wear traditional-style dress while touring the area, so the streets are often filled with kimono-clad travellers. This gives the viewer a sense of traditional Japan despite the fact that this photo was taken quite recently. This image especially differs from the contemporary in the pace of the life depicted in the photograph; due to the narrow street and the kimono, the viewer feels like life is taking a slower pace in comparison to modern living.

2) Momoiro Clover Z

When I think of “contemporary Japan,” images of Japan’s famous exports come to mind, such as games, robots, cars, etc. However, I chose to focus on J-Pop as one of Japan’s artforms that is becoming more popular with Western audiences. I specifically chose Momoiro Clover Z because they hold the record for highest concert attendance for a female group in Japan. The elements of this photo that express “contemporary Japan” are the eccentric clothing and the representation of idol culture. This photo differs from the traditional because of the clearly non-Japanese influences on the clothing design and the bright colors. By comparing both the traditional and contemporary images, I believe this describes the importance of balancing the old and the new in Japanese culture. Although the respect for the past way of life is clear in the

restoration of Nisanzaka in Kyoto, the popularity of the modern idol culture with its Western influences is an equally important piece of Japanese culture.

Category IV Question 7 – Cultural Comparison of Aesthetic Elements

1) Halloween Sundaes at Baskin Robbins, Japan

I chose to compare Baskin Robbins sundaes in Japan and America. First of all, the Japanese sundaes come in a variety of special seasonal designs, such as the Halloween sundaes depicted in this image. Seasonal foods are very popular in Japan, so it is no surprise that Baskin Robbins caters to this facet of Japanese culture at its Japanese stores. For aesthetic elements, the Japanese sundaes have an asymmetrical balance. To me, this is reminiscent of Japanese flower arrangement, which also emphasizes balanced asymmetrical designs. The Japanese sundaes also have many individual details, such as the cookies, small figures, and layers of toppings. Similar to wagashi, this attention to detail is evidence of great consideration for the consumer.

2) Regular Sundaes at Baskin Robbins, USA

In contrast, American Baskin Robbins sundaes do not have distinct seasonal designs. Although there are seasonal cakes, such as a Thanksgiving turkey cake, sundaes are largely the same no matter what season; only the chosen flavor changes. As for aesthetic elements, in contrast to the Japanese design, the American sundaes have a center-aligned symmetry. The two scoops are squeezed in side-by-side rather than tiered, the whip cream and cherry are placed in the middle, and the additional toppings are minimal. This is very different from the Japanese sundaes, which relate to the season, use an asymmetrical design, and include many small details. Perhaps the minimal creativity and aesthetic sense seen in the American sundaes are why creating sundaes and the placement of food is not generally considered an artform in America.

Category IV Question 8 – Aesthetic Concepts: Wabi-sabi

1) Wagashi

The aesthetic concept of wabi-sabi is comprised of three main parts: appreciation for the imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete. This can be interpreted as “appreciating flaws,” “savoring the moment,” and “looking beyond the obvious.” These three elements of wabi-sabi apply to wagashi as well. Imperfection is seen in the variation between each individual piece. Each piece cannot be identical because they are individually handmade, but the hand-crafted uniqueness of wagashi is part of the appreciation for the confectionary. Impermanence is seen in the fact that wagashi products change depending upon the season, so consumers can only find certain designs at certain times of the year. This increases the level of appreciation due to the limited duration of availability. Incompletion is seen in the fact that each piece of wagashi

contains more than just the confectionary itself; it also includes all the ideas connected to the season it represents.

2) Origami Crane & Sakura

In this origami art piece, imperfection is seen in the rough folds and lines in the paper. Although this can be thought of as sloppy folding, in actuality the imperfect lines contribute to the natural feel of the scene; if the lines were more precise, the origami pieces might appear more geometric, which would detract from the organic nature of the tree and cranes. Impermanence is seen in the action depicted in the scene. These origami pieces depict falling blossoms and a crane in flight, which are both very fleeting images that will likely never appear exactly the same elsewhere. Incompleteness is also seen in the actions of the origami pieces. Although the viewer only sees the action as it is frozen in time, it is easy enough to imagine the crane continuing its motion and more blossoms falling to the ground, therefore filling in the scene with what is not there.

Category V Question 9 – Role of Art in My Life

1) *Kimi no na wa* Theatrical Poster, 2016

Art has always played a large role in my life, both in appreciation of artistic pieces and making artwork myself. As a child I participated in more than one extracurricular art class, but I did not discover Japanese anime as my favorite art style until I was in middle school. Through watching anime, I came to appreciate the different styles of animation within Japanese animated works, which rekindled my interest in Western animation as an artform. Although I believe the storyline is a significant part of any animated work, I enjoy the artistic elements of animation as well. As an adult, I do not watch much Japanese anime anymore, but I continue to follow the animation industry. I find it interesting that the Western animation has almost entirely transferred to a three-dimensional style, which is in stark contrast to Japan. Personally, I enjoyed many of the older two-dimensional Western animated works and am sad to see the art style fade into disuse here. However, the technology developed for recent 3D animations is fascinating and I've come to truly enjoy the new animation style as well. I chose the theatrical poster for the film *Kimi no na wa* because I've been interested in this film since the first trailer was released—the art is truly stunning—and have followed the news story as it becomes popular with Western audiences as well. I feel that this image represents the large role Japanese animation has played in the development of my appreciation for animation as an artform.

2) Coca-Cola 100th Anniversary Logo, 2015

I am double majoring in Japanese and Communication Design, so I'm also very interested in design overall. While I was studying abroad in Japan, I would often stop to take a photo of interesting designs that I saw in posters, store names, etc. When my friends would

comment on why I was taking these photos, I would often point out what was interesting or unique about the design. This 100th anniversary commemorative Coca-Cola logo was one example of an interesting design I noticed and took a photo of. What my friends didn't see at first was that the bottle cap and bubbles form the shape of a "100." This habit of noting interesting designs is something that I've developed as a design student and it has a large impact on how I conduct myself whenever something aesthetic or artistic is involved, such as a presentation. Everytime I learn something new about design, I cannot look at the world the same afterward, which is another reason that I know art has a significant influence on my life.

Category V Question 10 – Visual Images of Japan in the 21st Century

1) *Yo-kai Watch* on Disney XD, 2016

For the artform image, I chose to consider the Japanese identity from the perspective of a child in the United States. This semester I participated in the Japanese Service Learning course and was able to interact with local elementary school students that were interested in learning about Japan. I was surprised to find out that many kids already heard of some Japanese folklore we were discussing because they watch the series *Yo-kai Watch* on the Disney Channel. For those children, their identity of Japan is likely limited to animation, games, and related merchandise for series similar to *Yo-kai Watch*, such as *Pokémon*. Personally, I am encouraged that Japanese animated works are becoming more readily accessible to kids, especially when anime that contain a lot of Japanese cultural elements—like *Yo-kai Watch* and *Doraemon*—are broadcast through Disney because Disney is extremely popular.

2) Kumamoto Earthquake Coverage, 2016

For the non-artform image, I considered the Japanese identity from an adult's perspective, which is why I chose this photo from the coverage of the earthquake aftermath in Kumamoto earlier this year. For many adults who have no interest in Japan or Japanese culture, they probably only hear about Japan whenever something related to Japan is covered in international news. Unfortunately, this is often related to natural disasters, so I believe many adults' identity of Japan is tied to images of earthquake related disasters. Even some of my family members who are aware of my interest in Japan, when they first heard that I was going to study abroad, their immediate concern was about earthquakes. I interpret this to mean that images of disaster tend to stick in people's minds. I think Japanese culture is very interesting, so I feel it's unfortunate that "earthquakes" is the limit of some people's knowledge of Japan, but I also find the reverse is true about other countries that I don't know much about either.