

Key Questions when looking at Japanese art, excerpts from *How to Look at Japanese Art* by Stephen Addiss, Harry N. Abrams, 1996

Materials and Medium: Is the work on paper, silk or another material? Does it use ink only or color? Why? Is it a hanging scroll, a handscroll or a folding screen? How does the choice of material and medium affect the result?

Subject: What is the subject of this painting? Is it traditional or new? Totally serious or partly funny? What does it tell us about Japanese culture?

Artist and Purpose: What do you know and what can you learn about the artist? Why do you think this work was painted?

Style: What is the brushwork like? Simple or complex? Free or restrained? Bold or delicate? Is the composition symmetrical or asymmetrical? Is there an interesting use of empty space?

Total Impression: How do the medium, the subject and the style interconnect? Is the painting effective in expressing dominant emotion or artistic vision? Does the painting show every aspect at once, or does it have hidden riches?