

okay

welcome to lecture number 18 buddhism
part two this one is going to be very
different than the first part however in
that

there we were talking about sort of
theory the underlying belief
system here we're going to talk about
the implications of those
beliefs especially compared to the west
in very practical terms we're actually
going to be looking at different types
of clothing for example

and to do that we're going to situate
in one particular

um country and that's japan

the reason for that is first that it is
an interesting

um you know manifestation of buddhism
when buddhism hits there

but beyond that and i'll explain
directly in the lecture

um japan has 10 times the population
density per area of the united states
and

it's a relatively small group of islands
that traditionally

has had quite a few people living on it
and as a consequence they

became very aware of their resources
they had limited number of resources and
they

um they were careful with them and they
also reused them in a certain kind of
way

so i think there's a you know we can't
you know forget the fact that there's
this

practical you know stressor on the
situation that helped create

what we're going to talk about today but
on the other hand buddhism provided an
ideology for this to manifest so not

just the people had to be careful with
the resources and reuse them and all
buddhism provided the ideological
underpinnings for it
in a bigger way however what we're going
to be looking at is you know two very
different aesthetics
coming out of two very different
viewpoints so the one
the western you know um the whole notion
of the physical metaphysical
the fetishization of things that don't
change and are perfect
and on the other hand an acceptance of
impermanence
and impermanence remember is one of the
central ideas of buddhism that
manifests itself in the way they thought
of the soul and things of that sort
so impermanence can also create an
aesthetic
an ideology how something should look
what what is the beautiful
um two very different ideas of of what a
beautiful object is one perfect and new
one
fading and old but let me jump right in
no
for that actually i'll say one thing and
it's important thing
[Music]
we could you know look at
modern japan and in many ways
you know walt has a great tradition
modern japan is very different than the
aesthetic
here and the reason for that i would
argue
and this is where it fits into the
course you know if you remember you know
we're sweeping across
europe and across the atlantic and acro
into north america and now we're

sweeping across the pacific to japan
well westernization hit there too
it wasn't indigenous but it wasn't
indigenous in the united states either
again
this thing coming out of the you know
mesopotamia northern africa was not
indigenous to europe
either so when it hit you know japan
and this would be in the 19th century
and the aesthetic especially in the 20th
century
it changed it so really you know you you
can't talk about you could be easy to
say well okay everything you're saying
about
japan is so interesting but it's not
quite applicable today
much of that aesthetic has been lost
well i'm not sure how much has been lost
but i would arg i would i would agree
that
it is westernization that we're talking
about here so
westernization and this is an important
point to note
it just doesn't stop with the united
states you know when it hits 400 years
ago and then
evolves today it has swept around the
world and i would argue
japan is an example of westernization
and unfortunately that westernization
has
you know modified and in some cases you
know
erode it the traditional beliefs
especially in something like aesthetics
but for now
for our point of view let's look at
buddhist aesthetics before
westernization occurs and it is
something to think about

you know that it has occurred and something to think about and we'll see examples of it people are trying to reclaim that tradition that was you know sort of world over by westernization but anyhow let's jump right into the prezi so made so much movement here and we are up here at number 18. so let's jump right in and again this is going to be the cultural implication this is sort of practical buddhism here so japan and buddhism just a little framing buddhism enter japan about 1500 years ago prior to that there was the shinto religion in japan among others shinto is arguably an earth-based religion by the way it has as it has a range of idiots kami venerated and a whole range of um shrines across japan thousands of these little shrines they are associated with particular places and it's not unfair to call them like genus loki um by the way if you're interested in like anime like miyazaki movies or something you've probably seen like these local um um deities that exist in places um like toto my neighbor toto is sort of an example of one uh that was for miyazaki fans there but the interesting thing is when when buddhism hit um japan it didn't it didn't overwrite shintoism the way christianity sort of you know eradicated older religions today roughly two-thirds

of people in japan consider themselves buddhists and two-thirds consider themselves shinto so if you add that up it's you know one and one and a third how does that work well that's because there's a big overlap people don't have any problem at all even today hearing you know thinking themselves as both shinto and and buddhist which is interesting i think so this is what i was noting before the united states for example an area is 25 times larger than the japanese islands yet the population of the u.s is only about two and a half times larger so everything else being equal japan has ten times a greater density of people than the united states and it has had a great density of people for for hundreds of years now so that presents a problem with resources and i'll tell you another part of that next japan was largely closed off from the rest of the world from the middle of the 17th and 19th centuries and some of the things that we're going to be looking at are right in that period that meant that not only was it relatively small you know a group of islands for the amount of people there but it's not like japan was going out to the rest of the world for resources and bring them in japan's resources were for a large measure coming right from

japan so that meant resources were in short supply and had to be you know um i note here treated sparingly so that sets up the the physical conditions what we're going to talk about although we'll see you know how this plays out ideologically as well and let me pop on screen here so we're set sorry let me jump down here and we're going to the next section which is something called wabi-sabi wabi-sabi is an aesthetics of uh sorry about that um of um

[Music]

well it's japanese but it's coming out of buddhism so let's look at that um wabi-sabi from its inception when we talk about it before you we even get into what it is um it's been associated with buddhism it's coming out of buddhism in many ways people have called wabi-sabi the zen of things in other words the buddhism of things zen is a is a type of buddhism um it's in japan and elsewhere and why would you call it the zen of things because you know many of the core spiritual philosophical ideas of zen are rolled into this aesthetic um and the first people who you know began showing this the first word begins appearing wabi-sabi are people who are very you know who are adherent to zen buddhism these are like monks and

priests
and tea masters who are sort of
officiators over
a buddhist ceremony so
wabi-sabi is coming out of zen i think
that's a fair
fair argument and more generally
wabi-sabi
is emerged out of buddhist
aesthetics and ideology so let's jump in
let me get off here for a moment um
wabi-sabi the two words had different
meanings and you can see them here
but it originally meant um the misery of
living alone
in nature away from society um
that's interesting right um thinking
about where we ended last time with
henry david thoreau
through dancing living in nature as
misery but rather a celebration
what happens here same sort of thing
around the 14th century
that changed so living in nature being
connected with nature
being in the cycles of nature no longer
began
seeing something bad but self-isolation
and involuntary
poverty and and this is what a buddhist
monk would do
began to be seen as an opportunity for
spiritual richness i think this is a
very good description here
and again think of thoreau and think of
how we end it last time with people like
john kavitzin saying tarot sort of
caught the essence of
of buddhism there and what kevin sees it
anyhow
as mindfulness and
again you know and john kevin's in was
very clear that you don't have to

um think of that as just living in nature you can kind of get anywhere and do that but it fostered an appreciation of the minor details of everyday life and simplicity of life so let's go through this a little further um wabi-sabi suggests qualities like impermanence humility asymmetry and imperfection it's a good description here these underlying principles are and by the way it should be clear with these large slides again sorry for all the texts on the slide it's not my preferred way of doing it i can't really pop on the screen as much either when i'm presenting but i you know i'm not an expert in wabi-sabi so i wanted to to put people on the screen who had written about it in an accessible way so and this is one but this is an apt a note here regarding our course the underlying principles are diametrically opposed to their western counterparts whose values are rooted in a hellenic view and by the way hellenic means traditional greek view i.e what we read heraclitus are rooted in a hellenic sort of heraclitus worldview that values permanence grander symmetry and perfection so right off the bat wabi-sabi is fundamentally different than the um the greek view that i said um heraclitus here but i should have said socrates coming out of the thing that socrates would consolidate which valued permanence perfection the sort of the grandeur of of a metaphysical heaven-like realm

japanese art infused with the spirit of wabi-sabi seeks beauty in the truth of the natural world looking towards nature for inspiration
it's all about random imperfections but it's also about and this is the hellenic thing
the fact that you know to socrates and subsequently the jain christian greco-roman tradition
there is this move away from decay and impermanence that's the problem we instead want to think about a metaphysical realm where you know it's free of all that
wabi-sabi is is diametrically opposed to that
this is an example of wally sapi art in this case two pieces of pottery these are both i believe bowls for the tea ceremony for mixing in the powdered green tea
and you can see you can imagine these comparatively
i should have actually put on screen here like wedgewood poet uh pottery from the west where you know it's perfect it's you know every line is geometrically like it's carefully you know hand painted and all
this also requires enormous art to be able to create this it might look like it's just thrown together but you know this this is the work of of master potters here this is you know and to become a master of pretty much anything in traditional japan men in the apprenticeship of ultimately 20 years
so um but but the goal the end game was not to create a perfect you know geometrically

you know perfectly round thin as possible geometric you know creation but the goal was to create this something that was caught up in the throes of nature and also looked like already it was sort of decaying and falling away so um just beautiful um so zen buddhist temples in japan led the the way for japanese arts i i think that's that's correct so and it underscores what we're saying here that you know this is emerging out of buddhist ideology focusing on the natural the impermanent and the humble and those pieces of powder we saw were like that um these simple rustic objects the you know you can see the innate beauty in the random patterns left by the flow of nature it's it's meant to be seen there's actually a phrase and i am forgetting it in japan now but it's objects that are born not made that these things are just sort of naturally created rather than being crafted by someone's hands and suddenly things like a crack in a bamboo vase the decay in a not an old timber came to symbolize symbolize mujo which is the buddhist tendon of impermanence and constant flux so if you remember last lecture when i did impermanence i told you what the word was in in pali likely the language that the buddha spoke and also that that um word translated

into japanese is
musho so mujo
the central notion of buddhism so we're
using in japanese now of
impermanence and you know if you forget
what that was just go back
in the president look at the previous
slides a previous lecture
because that is turned into an aesthetic
is wabi-sabi it's not exactly right but
mujo is behind wabi-sabi
wabi-sabi became a term associated with
this quality in such mujo forms as
defining aspects of wabi-sabi objects
so it's the idea that you would take
something like a cracked vase
and why that well because it's decaying
right it's it's at that point it had
become an object that in the west and i
want to show you this with clothing
would have been seen as imperfect and
ready to be discarded
right it's done then you know you could
try to repair it but it would never be
right really the repair would be obvious
and you'd see you had a crack droz
and in western aesthetic thinking you
would get rid of that boss
right you just wouldn't want to you know
especially if you're really concerned
about having a beautiful house
why would you have a cracked vas and
especially if someone came into your
house they would say well wait this
person you know
they probably don't have a lot of money
or something they ever cracked positing
there
you would get rid of it that's the
western aesthetic but with this one
remember if mujo is central to this
impermanence
then suddenly something that's that's

decaying
that is showing its signs of age would
be
valued and ultimately and this is the
hard thing to wrap your head around
valued more so that and we'll actually
give you examples in a little bit of
cracked vases
cracked vases would become superior
to new vases because they would show
mujo
at work impermanence now that's really a
hard thing to wrap your head around from
a western perspective
where we would think of something you
know broken and decaying
as as you know you should get rid of
but in this view it means that you
should suddenly
let me evalua you what i mean um
so hold on let me see i can pull this
down sorry put so much on the slides but
i just want to cover it
yeah um i'm just giving you
some background on where this comes from
and so the foundation of um japanese art
forms like tea ceremony and flower
ranging are
very important these really emerge
early on like in the 16th century
and i'm giving you an example
of there you go
here you see and again with riku
which is a japanese monk
laying out you know what would be
the defining narrative defining
aesthetic for
japan for hundreds of years so it's not
that this and
it was always existing in japan again
buddhism comes to japan
you know long before but it becomes more
and more influential as the population

grows and
and they're using their resources more
and more carefully
you know it first takes up in the tea
ceremony and
i just gave you the six story of when um
ricky saw a tile you know a rustic roof
tile
um and he suddenly thought about it and
thought well this is the spirit of what
we are going for
so it's a little history lesson here i
guess that's
where this aesthetic begins so if you go
back and remember those two
uh pieces of pottery i showed you yeah
they look like a rough
tile of a roof they're even more rough
than than like a traditional tile
but in from its very beginning it was
seen as that was the ideal
so that you know and in a way it's it's
sort of
um an affectation trying to make it look
old and decaying i mean it's created
that way
but it does sum up the spirit of it
but it's also very true that what i just
said previously about the decaying
broken things being valued
would also be the case so
this really by the time you get to the
17th century
you're going to have this fully worked
out so again i'm giving you a little
history lesson here
um the the you know the essence of life
impermanence and our situation
the folly of trying to deny the
immovable truth
that's buddhism right that's mujo here
that's the notion that everything is
decaying and we just can't

we can't forget that
so
matate another japanese word um
and that is seeing something for not
just for what it was
intended but for another purpose as
well and that's that's an interesting
notion because
what it means is something would have a
first life
and then it could have a second life
so
a gourd is the example here um
it was originally a water flask then
would be used as
a flower of oz so the idea here is
there's almost like a buddhist notion of
non-self you know because you there's no
continuity over time
well at one point in its life it would
be a water flask but when it became
broken and no longer used for that
it could have another purpose altogether
it's like having a second life
it's not quite reincarnation and
remember
tequila horn was very careful to say
that in his view of buddhism
reincarnation is is actually like a
reuse of things like
um kind of like almost a recycling of
things
and that's what's happening here that
that gourd could no longer be used as a
vas
as a pitcher then we'll be called into
use as an aesthetic
object of beautiful so what do i mean by
that
here's an example of a cracked gourd
previously a pitcher you now has become
a vaz
uh it's perfect right and it's an

everyday object but the everyday object
is seen
as being you know
actually a work of art and and certainly
the flower helps here but
it's very clear that it you know it is
beautiful
and of course right here obfuscated by
the flower is the crack itself
so yeah it's it's not something that
would
no longer be used and thrown away and of
course you know if you have an aesthetic
that values only the new
again who wants to have a cracked water
bottle sitting around right i mean you
know you're just going to throw it away
but not here
mitate is arguably at the very heart of
zen and by the way i'm the person saying
this is a zen buddhist monk
so you can have something like a
millstone which is uh the most
sort of industrial objects in this
period and that is you have a mill that
grinds grain
and you need this big round stone to do
it
over the years this industrial object
would become
abraded and worn down and when it's no
longer rough and all it couldn't serve
its function
and that means you would throw it away
but no
matate the idea is even something like
that
a worn down industrial object you would
not
you know throw it away but it would have
a new life
as something centrally beautiful
in perhaps a japanese garden here

perhaps a stepping stone
um so what would that look like well
here's a zen garden a traditional dry
zen garden
of um a gravel that's been
that's been raked these are all round
stones
that they have been sort of shaped into
being round here and all
and there in the middle of this
carefully crafted beautiful garden
is a millstone that's not if you look
carefully one of these kind of natural
stones but that was a stone that
work was in um and that's right here by
the way
that was you know something that was in
an industrial
you know operation before a big grinding
facility
and of course they would have been kind
of small-scale there weren't steam
engines connected to it or anything but
that's that's the idea here that even
something like that
can have a second life now in practical
terms
yeah that made enormous sense right for
a lot of people living on a small island
or not doing a lot of trading with the
rest of the world and bringing
other resources in but it also is
is a wonderful expression of the sort of
buddhist idea that things are naturally
decaying
and going from like one life to another
not in the sense of being reincarnated
and it's not like that
you know millstone magically will be in
a in the celestial realm perfect again
it's not like that but it it does have
have purpose in the world and still
lives in the world

even after its first use in a way
i think um putting words in his mouth
but i think like tikni adhon his his
revision of what
the buddha must have meant by
reincarnation i think this is a
wonderful physical manifestation of that
that it lives on after its first life
um and the idea here is that objects do
not have um
just one purpose you know the real
question is here how will you use
an object i mean that's actually the
challenge for um
for us all but but really for an artist
too how do you how do you artistically
use
that you know um and you know the
the importance here is again the phrase
here
in knowing how to use things well trying
to see things in different ways
there is no proper way here again this
is the buddhist monk saying this this is
the notion that
because things are you know can have
another life what will that life
be it's not necessarily you know
we pop on screen here it's not
necessarily
you know defined no one's saying exactly
that that millstone has to become
a centerpiece of a garden but the
challenge
is to to to think of those things that's
that's the real challenge
and in a way and we're going to see it
when we get to clothing the challenge is
kind of to make it your own
in other words when it had a defined
purpose whoever fashioned that to be a
millstone
they decided what it was going to be now

it's your
chance to decide what it's going to be
we're going to see it with clothing
where clothing as it
decays more and more becomes more and
more you know
your clothing in particular so
um this is the book that i was quoting
from also a useful book
is the japanese art of repairing pottery
with lacquer
it's it's your urushi lacquer which is
actually sap from a tree it's where
traditional lacquer comes from if you
know but
traditional urushi is a sap from a tree
in traditional
shellac actually comes from the shells
of an insect and and both
are sort of dissolved in alcohol to be
used
um all the beautiful black and the black
and red japanese powder you've seen
all different sorts of colors are those
that's the predominant
generally the predominantly background
canvas is made of this
but here's an idea that's something
really unusual
what if you had a pot not a um a gourd
here but an actual
piece of pottery and it fell and broke
well in the west that would be it right
could you repair it yeah and and you'll
see people
doing repairs and the goal of the repair
generally
is to look like there's no repair is to
make
it make it seem like the piece is still
new
still perfect and and not to
you know let people know that you have a

broken pot sitting there
well you can think about it from this
point of view
you know of impermanence you're going to
want to keep that pot
but but how do you do that and that
becomes a challenge and an aesthetic
challenge
and consuki is the art where that gets
worked out
it literally means golden seams you know
um and it uses lacquer mixed with gold
powder so at the end
it's going to look like um gold it's
going to look like an actual string of
gold i'm going to show you pictures of
it in a minute
that will emphasize the point of break
and furthermore
this is meant to look like um like
a natural form so in other words if the
cracks go up there like my hand they're
meant to like emulate up like a like a
tree or something
so let me get off and show you what i
mean
um yeah just another thing here
it it's it's again not to to cover
anything up you know it symbolizes
and applies a reconciliation of what is
broken um
that we are resolved to to you know to
value it as
let me show you pictures worth a
thousand words right
so this is an example of kenzugi
this was a pot it no doubt fell and
broke
and instead of being discarded or
you know repaired in a way to look like
there was no repair
the repair is celebrated with these
veins of gold and again this is what i

meant by you know looks like a tree in the winter and there are no leaves or anything and the branches go up like this and you know that arguably then and this is what's so interesting about this aesthetic based on impermanence that pot arguably is better than the first one in a real wabi-sabi sense so first whoever made that pot was aware of the aesthetic of wabi-sabi there was no desire to make that look perfect but even though it had that sort of natural imperfection built into it by the potter that was the look of it it actually in terms of wabi-sabi got improved a lot by being broken and you know not just being broken of course but by the consuki repair and that repair suddenly made that into an even better object in this terms there's far more an aesthetic sense of lobbying you know sabi here than in the original even though the original was made that way another repair um this you can see similarly it's it's not quite as like a perfect tree branches growing up but still very much defined by nature and and really defined by nature right the laws of nature when that pot dropped and hit something hard broke it you know those stress lines and all formed naturally right it's not like someone you know very carefully cut all those

lines or something
that is nature and work i should note
that kansugi has actually become
like a craft in the western world in the
u.s in particular
where people actually will buy pots
break them and then repair them to get
this
effect um okay but originally
it was designed as a way and ago
going back to that gourd which was a
water bottle that became
you know a beautiful buzz here
this is designed to give it a second
life the first life and i think in case
of both of these pieces of pottery was
was wonderful and the potter
you know really did all they could or or
wonderfully expressed wabi-sabi in their
craft
but here it actually because it is
impermanent and broken became better
and also a wonderful icon of
the sort of buddhist notion of
impermanence because when you look at
that
suddenly what do you think you think oh
it's beautiful but i mean if you
if you sort of interrogate the piece
that's that's impermanence right
that's life that's the fact that life is
not going to
remain perfect that you know you're
going to be
you know you can something can be
shattered or put back together
by the way this aesthetic has actually
been used
i kind of almost alluded to it there
with therapy
psychotherapy people talk about
you know seeing the self seeing a person
um who has been shattered for whatever

reason

you can repair who you are and come back better than ever like this pot it's a wonderful

it's a wonderful metaphor for that that you know if for whatever reason you feel well shattered and you need to recover you can come back better than ever and in the way that

that again with tiknit hans reading of buddha

and reincarnation that is that right the self

that previous self is gone but a new one has taken its place

and and a new better one healed one yeah so

this is the uh source for that as well

so i want to talk about clothing here

and i want to first talk about

clothing in the west and the aesthetic

that we have

based on our fascination

with the unchanging and perfect and

again that's sort of plato that's the

judeo-christian idea

of the metaphysical you know that which

never changes

and pop on screen here um

traditional clothing in japan i'm a

traditional

going back 400 years or so um

is you know very different from

commonplace clothing in

in the united states and and and

particularly

uh um and again i'm comparing it to the

us because that's our culture

particularly or the culture of where

ucsb is here may not be your culture

uh may just be your culture for a while

but it is

the american culture western culture i

would argue in the way it's spread
around the world
which fetishizes the new and perfect
so i'll get off the screen here um yeah
there is a business suit
a business suit from 17th century 18th
century is the 19th century which pretty
looks
much looks the same as the 20th century
um in the 21st century
um you know now it's been adapted to
women as well
but clearly it's it's
well let me show you tell you the
history of it before i jump into that
um it began emerging out of the 17th
century so
this person here is not a business
person per se
this person is a courtier he is a member
of the court he is a member of the
government the sort of
entourage of the king the people who
rule the country um
and this that 17th century suit is worn
by royalty
and the royal court so this is like the
pinnacle of
culture at the time i mean this is at
the very very top you know we talk about
like being modern royalty or something
but this is actual royalty um but what
happens is
in that period in the 17th century and
and and continuing for centuries
an emerging middle class who was making
their money in
trade and then in business and and like
manufacturing too
eventually by the time you get to the
19th century this middle class began to
get a lot of money and
they also wanted to show that they were

wealthy and powerful and what they did
then
is they began emulating that form of
fashion
and the modern business suit was born in
a way it's coming
out of being royalty per se but it's
this new group who wants to think of
themselves as a new kind of royalty and
this is
very upwardly mobile middle class people
so they're they're a great example of a
sign of wealth
and you know it's not only limited to
business suits it'll become limited
it'll be everything that a
wealthy person wears again this is not
just
royalty this is a middle class a very
wealthy middle class a business class
who wants to show
that they've arrived and how do you show
it in the simplest basic ways by what
you wear
so you know walking down the street you
will be immediately
recognized as someone that is wealthy
that's in the nature of clothing but
what i want to talk about today
and this would is going to impact these
two aesthetics
is the fact that not only is the
clothing you know well made
and fashionable and maybe like couture
like personally made just for you yeah
yeah that's all true but it also has to
be new
and perfect right if it has a little rip
in it or a tear in it
that could that could ruin the whole the
whole uh the whole
you know image you're trying to project
it

and and again think back to the potter
we just looked at
you're going to see the difference here
but let me continue
yeah um over time
this aesthetic move to more and more
people
and you know all sorts of people now
wear
business suits and you can see them and
you know there's going to be a
distinction between white collar and
blue collar
you know literally the color shirt but
part of that distinction will be that
blue color will be worn by people who
actually work for a living
you actually do something for a living
uh i say this having been a furniture
maker for
uh 20 years um and your clothes are
going to become
tattered and worn and all and that's
part of it so
to signal that you were part of this
emerging really wealthy group you would
have clothes that weren't tattered and
worn
yeah um but for a piece of clothing to
be
most effective it has to be impeccably
made
worn and this is a crucial thing from
our point of view
you know maintained if it's not
it's immediately going to take away that
impression and you know so thinking
here about a business suit well a
business suit is
like two or three pieces maybe it has a
vest that goes in and out of fashion
vests too
but you have pieces that are all matched

that are all generally made out of a
very fine
fabric i mean it's a very you know high
thread count in the looming of it
and if that gets torn or ripped
the whole garment all three pieces is
done it has to go
could you try to get it a reweaver to
repair it yeah but the very nature of
this material is that that
probably will never be fully invisible
right so the whole garment has to go out
the uh
the door so i mentioned this it seems
like just a great example
of you know the aesthetic that we've had
and how we've gotten here that we have
you know these garments and we have
more generally we'll see objects that
have to be perfect and if there's just a
little bit of imperfection
it can no longer be used in a way that
sums up our relationship to clothing in
the west
it certainly sums up our relationship to
clothing that you would wear
you know somewhere special whether it's
to work or going out somewhere
it has to be perfect if it's not
suddenly
it's it's it's not usable anymore how
different it is
right than that gourd we looked at or
those pieces of pottery that they became
actually better when damaged not in this
case
but we're going to see in japanese
aesthetic regarding
fabric and and garments that
they do actually become better when
damaged
yep so
here it is summing it up you know um for

the past 400 years
in in the west now so we're not talking
about 400 years with the development of
wabi-sabi and the tea ceremony and
flower arranging and
and um consuge and all that in japan no
but we're talking about the west here
it's just the opposite an aesthetic and
of course i'm saying that word a lot but
that just means a standard of beauty
that fetishized the new and pristine and
depreciates you know
anything it deprecates anything that is
worn
and decaying um it it begins with
fashion
i would argue or at least you can see it
very clearly with fashion early on
but then it has to do with all sorts of
different things
any object that you could have and avas
would be would be an example where
pretty much
anything you know i'm looking down at my
glasses on the table here you know a
pair of glasses if they get worn
and broken and all yeah they're done
right
there's no aesthetic to value them or to
give them a second life the way
there would be with the sort of japanese
culture we're talking about
and tarot by the way um throw it's
always our touchdown here
um fully was aware of this right and he
said beware of any enterprise that
requires new clothes
that in fact you should you know do
things that can be done in
in in clothes that are you know they're
showing their age
yep um yep and
the problem with this right i'll just

make explicit which i guess is kind of obvious
environmentally this is a disaster right so you snag that business suit it becomes unusable you literally have to throw away three pieces of you know garments that are perfectly good and serviceable to probably have many years of life and you just put a little patch on that you'll put a little patch on the next one you know you could wear that thing you know four or five times more than you've worn it but the aesthetic here is one of you know hoping for perfection of non-changing of not you know of permanence um and as a consequence there you go it's it's increasing the climate footprint of fashion multiple times so it's it's not just that we're going after things because um you know they they are fashionable right and they you know we want a new style every year or whatever or fast fashion we want a new style every few weeks it's not just that but it's the idea that we like the new and beautiful and perfect and when it's no longer new it is no longer perfect we no longer think of it as beautiful that's our standard of beauty our aesthetic but you can see what we've had with japanese culture there's another aesthetic that sees the not new the worn as beautiful so let's look at that in

clothing next yeah in actual japanese
clothing ah
yeah um and now just note and
whenever you're born into something like
this any kind of aesthetic
you know um it may seem natural and and
right
you know so no matter what i'm saying
here and no matter what you might think
if you see someone in a business soon
with a little patch on it you know
trying to do a you know really like
high-powered powerpoint presentation or
something
um you might think well gee that just
looks wrong to me
um yeah but it's worth noting that that
that is
just an aesthetic that we have taken on
and
maybe you have taken on personally so in
this class we've looked at a lot of
attitudes that
we've not only seen emerge over the
years over the centuries but
that dictate what we think today or
presumably would
if we don't you know challenge our
thinking but this is an example of one
where that aesthetic has lasted a while
but it does raise this question i think
it's important question
you know what would an aesthetic that
issues the new and pristine
and favoring the worn and faded be like
well
this buddhist inspired wabi-sabi is is
is an example of it it is you can see
why i
laid it out this way hopefully ken that
it is a challenge
to western thinking it's a challenge to
this view

this view that we're born into and we think is right well buddhism that you know made a whole different sort of you know ideology in in places like japan meant that you know like wabi-sabi this this aesthetic that valued the decaying the imperfect the natural um that then influenced not only things like pottery but clothing as well and that's that's what i want to talk about next so i'll pop off so let's get some examples of it this is uh first one is called boro um recall the wabi-sabi suggests you know um i'm quoting here from juniper's book you know impermanence humility cemetery asymmetry imperfection and you know in the previous section we saw that permanence grandeur cemetery perfection um can look like with respect to fashion so what we're going to do here is see the contrasts right between western so they didn't have to give you pictures you don't know what a business suit looks like you all know what you can come up with your own image of what a beautiful fashionable piece of clothing is like boro is a response to that a specific one it literally translates as rags so what a wonderful counter this is right so i don't know what the word is for like new total perfect textile but rags is the opposite right so whatever that suit is when it's perfect and new the complete opposite is

when it gets converted to just rags but in japan it's become synonymous not that was the original meaning but with a technique of patching and stitching together and mending garments it really comes out of northern japan it has a long his long tradition and the mending is itself done with something we're going to talk about in a following section which is called chashiko which is a very coarse kind of stitching but it's it's meant to repair and and and fix things so it it it takes a very minimalist approach right it usually just uses one color thread usually white thread although i think boro looks particularly cool with black thread but it's typically white thread on blue garments and it has incredibly gorgeous patchwork so it creates as this person notes you're talking about it endless possibilities for for textiles so here are some examples of burrow pictures always worth a thousand words right this is a traditional japanese garment this is sort of the height of boro note that these are all pieces stitched together at this point the underlying garment i i couldn't really tell you which it is because the pieces have have been stitched together so but let me give you some other examples of it and this is actually a museum installation of some traditional boro and and one thing to note here and i

think it's fair comparison
if you look at this garment the closest
thing we have to it in the west is like
a patchwork quilt
and i think a patchwork quilt is sort
of borrow in this
sense and that the history of it and the
way it's thought of
as sort of taking little pieces from
different lives and putting them
together
and a way of remembering the past i
think it really is in this tradition
but where burro
departs from this i would argue is it
takes a big jump
which is actually into garments
themselves into fashion so it may be
cool to have that you know in the u.s
traditionally in the u.s and even today
since you know quilting is just
a big thing um to have a quilt on your
your bed
to walk around with essentially a quilted
fabric a
fabric made of burrow literally made out
of rags
it never became an aesthetic here and i
think partly because of the different
tradition we have doesn't mean that it
can't
and we'll show you some an example of
modern burrow in a minute
but you can see where this is not you
know
a quilt on a bed but someone is walking
around dressed in that someone is
walking around
wearing these pants but in this view
of this garment to be clear
you know whatever this was when it first
was
produced you know it may have been

beautiful it may have been perfect and
if you went out and bought this thing it
may have been a wonderful expression of
the designer's intention
that's why we buy things right we like
the materials and all but
the designer has this vision for how how
we could look wearing this particular
piece of clothing
fair enough but here this person whoever
owned this has so fully made that
their garment in other words maybe a
designer
did i'm not sure designer actually made
this one originally but
you know maybe someone else had a vision
for what it could be
but this vision is entirely that of the
person who
made it into their own so in other words
back to this teaknight horn
reincarnation thing
you know this has been reborn into a new
garment
and the facilitator of that new birth
was the person who owned it
so you could see why this would become a
more valuable garment
in some sense than the original just
like that kasugi pot with the gold veins
going through and showing the repair
because this then becomes truly your
garment
and in that sense and if you really you
know think this aesthetic
you know or really fully you fully feel
the force of this aesthetic
that you would want the garment to
become damaged in a certain way or you
know you wouldn't
you certainly wouldn't dread the first
you know um
day that you snagged it because on that

day it would begin a process of becoming
yours
more and more and more over time and
and that's pretty cool so it's decaying
yes but another way of thinking of that
is
i keep going back to tiknia it's being
reborn
again and again it's like a self right
it becomes a wonderful metaphor for
herself yes it was something
once but every day every time it's
emerging into something new again
is it decaying sure are we as you know
tiknit
and the buddha said moving toward death
yes but
we are also being reborn again and again
in new ways and and this
shows it i mean that's that's a literal
you know pictorial representation of
that
um boro is is is is coming around
today in that it's now um
something that that people are are doing
it's sort of a
hipster culture sort of thing you can if
you go online
you'll find books on boro you borrow
clothing um
and and this would be an example i i
think so one of the problems you always
have to watch with this right
is that no doubt designers are going to
start designing burrow and i think
actually i forget where i got this this
might be an example of that
um and that sort of defeats the purpose
it's like buying
jeans that are all ripped and torn
original that aesthetic which was kind
of a boro like aesthetic by the way
coming out of the 1960s with the uh

you know the hippie culture was that you would um
you know celebrate your genes becoming older and all that that didn't catch on and in fact and this is the danger that was taken up by the fashion industry and now over the years we get you know all different sorts of fads and what sort of rip the people want what sort of you know um acid washed people want with their their genes it's become a thing and that's a problem but originally the idea was that you would make it your own and and this i think is is a great is a great image by the way in the sense that you really see the idea that this is made out of brags that this is a celebration of wearing rags and again that very thought to the west wait a celebration of wearing rags but yeah so sakuyori is something different again it comes from the japanese word not for rags but for torn or ripped and what it you the idea here is osaki uri that fabric is being woven on a loom there's a traditional floor loom that they had in japan that the people had even in rural settings it's very it's very simple by a loom i mean it's just a wooden um instrument a tool and and doesn't have anything mechanized you just move back and forth anyhow traditionally you know with the gloom if you're making um textiles you have you know it's basically a grid

of of yarn right um of thread
going one way or another well with
sakiyori
the difference is the waft the one
the thread going in one direction may
have been new and there was often hemp
which could be
grown locally and environmentally is a
good thing in its own right
but then main color
pieces of thread were not thread at all
but ripped fabric thin little pieces of
fabric so
here's the idea you have a shirt and
it's gotten so worn you can't do
anything else with it
what do you do you rip it up into long
strips and then you take those long
strips
and you weave those into an entirely new
piece of material
so um
so this is um from a book about sakuyari
you know um it's the notion
well it goes into detail about it but
you know it's two approaches to
rag weaving here one rooted in frugality
one in necessity and altogether a
perfect approach to historically
unprecedented textile economy in which
we now live
all right so what is all this about here
it's the notion that
here is yet another example where you
can
counter the you know the idea of new
textiles that are abundant and cheap and
wasteful polluting and sometimes
accompanied by human rights abuses of
textile workers so all the things we saw
in you know the film the true cost well
how do you counter that well here's
another way you can do it borrow is one

example you can sort of step
outside as much as possible of that you
know fashion
problem by first buying a responsibly
made
um garment out of the right kind of
materials that are less environmentally
problematic
but then giving it a life of you know
three four five six times longer than it
would traditionally have
and and sakuyari is so wonderful because
then at the very
end you know if you can't do anything
else with it you rip it up or cut it up
into little strips and you weave those
into a new
piece of material but make a new garment
from it
so let me give you some examples well
first this is the
loom i was talking about it's it's a
wooden loom would have been made by a
local furniture maker
um they they they are kind of fun i have
to admit i don't have a loom like this
but i
um i don't as a furniture maker i
sometimes would work with textiles but
never was really involved with textiles
but now i actually have a loom where i
um
make things which is kind of fun but
what we're seeing here
is so these threads are one thing they
would have been like hemp or whatever
whatever but each of these going across
here
this was actually ripped out of a former
garment this would have been like a red
shirt or a blue shirt or whatever
and it's very nice because the threads
going across here

define it but literally this is
ripped up old clothing being woven into
a new piece of fabric
that can be made into a new piece of
clothing like
this in fact you know so what this woman
is wearing is a traditional
uh japanese vest that has been made with
sakuyori
if i wasn't worried about copyright
since this is going to get put up on
on youtube i would have shown you this
video because
there's a video that this woman shows
how she does the sakiori and rips it and
all
um do look it up and and do watch it
it's only a few minutes but you get a
better idea of how it goes but
all you really need to know is that
woman is wearing
a bunch of rags that were woven together
and all sorts of garments can be created
this
is a jacket which i think looks amazing
you may you know not like this
particular style or color and you can
you can see how it's sort of rough on
the edges here and all
but obviously the person who made this
was was very very skilled
in that they you know they use some
fabric here when they're going for
smoothness
they put in a roughness here but as a
design element
but what a remarkable remarkable
accomplishment that is because it's just
a
um a bunch of rags and and yet look at
it
again in the sense of rebirth
reincarnation

in the sense of you know living many
lives this garment
had may have you know the garments that
comprise this may have lived many lives
before
but but what a final life they had
settled into with this
it's just rather amazing
so another thing that we could talk
about
is shashiko and this is more the
direct sewing the technique of
sewing it literally means little stabs
or little pierces
and it emerges like in the 17th century
and it's a way of reinforcing
a garment but doing so
and not hiding the repair in other words
like a re-weaver could
could carefully re-weave something so
maybe it didn't look like it was going
to be repaired
but in this case it's like those gold
veins going on that
the pottery it's meant to be right there
in your face showing that it is it is
happening
um and you know sometimes this person
notes to use red thread and i'll show
you
lots of different colors are being used
now but traditionally it's just white
thread
so let me give you an example of what
this is because it's really very simple
and that's both you know the appeal and
arguably the beauty of it
so this is obviously a pair of jeans
obviously had a couple rips in it
so a piece of fabric was put behind and
this is shachika it is the simplest of
all things
it uses a needle it's a pretty big

needle if you notice here which makes it easy because these are these are big stitches right these are not like you know imagine the tiny little stitches here um tiny little stitches here that the garment was made out of by comparison these are these are massive but that's the idea that that anyone can do it right you do not have to be an expert at you know couture to be able to do something like this you can you know anyone can do it and that's the idea you know and you don't you know get a get a uh a spool of thread and and a big needle like this and you can you can do it for years that's all you need is no machinery nothing else utterly simple and of course that's it's it's elegance but what you can do with it so this would be another example in a general way i would say of a garment that's truly been made into you know this person's garment and this is chico here but again this is um i'll say fancier different technique where the stitches are all going in a circle here you can see another pattern of stitches here you can see a different pattern of stitches here and of course different material and these are this was another piece of clothing here this again is like walking around with a quilt on but the big leap that's done here is this is the aesthetic the fashion aesthetic

and you could see where were you know in
the west we tried
to to get this in the uh like the 60s
with jeans and all and it kind of
succeeded and kind of failed
but here it it has succeeded and it and
it is coming back again and shishiko was
part of that
and this pair of jeans you know whatever
they once were and maybe they were
you know they weren't even washed at all
maybe originally
um this was like all dark blue here and
all
now they're faded they should have been
falling away
and yet they're becoming more and more
and more this person's
genes they are being made renewed
again and again reincarnated in the
sense of you know
recycled and reused and and they
they still retain the original so this
is like a metaphor for the
the non-self right yeah there is
continuity there
but on the other hand with each passing
repair
they become something new again and
in this aesthetic arguably become
something
better more beautiful more personal more
more perfect even i would say um
just to show you yes traditional is
white sometimes red thread but gee look
you don't need to have a whole different
machine a whole different technique
anything
just switch to you know get yourself two
or three or four different spools of
thread
and you could just go crazy a very
beautiful technique i think

and finally um this is
uh sort of in a way of summing up the
the whole idea
um this aesthetic the way it's existed
in japan and again coming out of
buddhism

[Music]

you know the whole idea here might best
be expressed by the term of matana
i started with wabi-sabi because
wabi-sabi really does express
a good bit of this

[Music]

is something again it the word can just
be translated as
wasteful but it often has this emotional
sense of like what a waste you know
it's been around for a long time um back
as far as the 13th century
and it is inseparably caught up here as
this person notes with
buddhist ideas about transcendence and
and what that is is of course
impermanence here let me explain further
it means wasteful but in the full sense
conveys a feeling of
awe on appreciation for the gifts of
nature
in other words if something is truly
amazing
and wonderful and beautiful and you care
about it
what a waste if it if it would would go
away right
you you know to imagine okay
think of it this way imagine a boss
falls on the floor
beautiful voice beautiful wabi-sabi vas
falls on the floor
and you know you pick it up and you put
it in a trash can and somebody
walks by um and looks at it and says you
know

matanai what what a waste that that's
that's that's wrong it's it's too
beautiful
you know quick someone get that out and
repair it and make it
renew it into something astonishingly
beautiful inlaid with gold
so the idea here is you know
this id this aesthetic
um can be expressed you know um in the
single word matinee of
do not waste you know what a waste if
you if you let something like that be
wasted what a waste if you
take a you know a perfectly good piece
of clothing and after one little snag
you throw it away
my tainai what a waste that would be
yep it became very um
popular i would say or in the
area after the second world war the
post-war period
and at the time there was resource
scarcity food insecurity
you know throwaway culture and what this
was in a way was
um kind of a counter to westernization
because
really after it's really after the
second world war and astonishingly in
the last 70 years that
the aesthetic in japan and values and
all have
come under um well have collided with
the west in a big way that collision's
been happening along for hundreds of
years in some sense but
you know the 20th century especially in
the second half of that
especially where that collision happened
and
matana became the sort of response to it
and it's interesting because that word

now has
has sort of jumped out of japan same as
wabi-sabi you'll hear use it
wabi-sabi um but actually
at one of the u.n some some it's a
kenyan environmentalist said this very
beautiful quote i think
even a personal level we can all reduce
reuse and recycle which is embraced as
matinae in japan
a concept that also calls us to express
gratitude
to express to express respect and avoid
wasting so this whole attitude that
we've been talking about this
aesthetic coming out of buddhist
thinking
as it manifested in japan and again we
could have talked about a lot of other
different buddhist countries and all
but here these i thought were
interesting because
it really does all come together with
this expression here
of you know matinae of not wasting
expressing gratitude seeing something is
having you know literally multiple
lives and avoiding wasting it it's not
it's not just something you have to do
environmentally
it's coming out of this view where where
things
don't you know aren't perfect
that they don't start to decay and that
is seen as a bad thing
life is impermanence life is decay
everything is changing
the river changes we change we are no
longer who
you know we were even a few years ago
nor is
the pot that we had or the pants that we
were they are changing too

and we shouldn't we shouldn't try to
stop any of this right and you can
you can kind of see the west where we're
all you know even in our physical
appearance you know
we don't want to show any signs of aging
we want to look like i don't know what
we're you know 20 years old and everyone
does and you go to all these lengths
with you know
modification of your actual face and all
to do that well but in this culture
that's that
that doesn't quite make any sense
because
permanence is not going to happen you
cannot stay permanently 20 years old
it's not going to work but but hey i can
tell you at 60
it's okay things as you get older and
all
with with with age comes something
different again and
these are things to be celebrated anyhow
let me get off of the screen here
and we've done number 18.
so the basic idea here and it's it's a
simple one really
is you have two different um
ways of approaching the world we spent
most of the class dealing with one the
western approach
we saw at the very beginning how ideas
of you know
impermanence the idea of a of a
metaphysical realm around beyond
all this where nothing changes how
that's had enormous appeal in the
west
but looking at another culture like
buddhism
where that has been centrally not part i
mean centrally

part of that religion is the idea of
impermanence
and that plays out with something like
human beings so
in this sort of you know greco-roman
judeo-christian view
human beings are are you know this
amalgamated part of the world
part not of the world of a metaphysical
realm and we're just on our way
being you know to get back home again
and be with god in this metaphysical
realm where
socrates wants to to sort of imagine
himself intellectually is reaching that
realm
but that realm doesn't exist in buddhism
i mean
tikni adhon is clear maybe yeah maybe
some people will talk about that but
in his view and i think it's it's a good
view to
it's a good interpretation of buddhism
for us to look at
and his view that realm doesn't exist so
if there's only the here and now
how do we comport ourselves how do we
act into here and now what do we value
here
and you can see in japan where a culture
would come
out of that thinking that would value
things that were constantly decaying
constantly changing
not as becoming more you know more and
more inferior
but becoming better and better each time
you know each
you know time you make a repair on that
garment it becomes
better and certainly you know that
wabi-sabi pot may have been beautiful
when the you know potter first handed it

to you
but when it you know ultimately will
break and if you use it every day
if you don't just keep it in your locked
cabinet if you use it every day
pots have a good chance of breaking then
you get that
and if you use pants every day they're
going to decay and they're going to wear
down
and they're going to need repairs but
that's okay
because you have at your disposal this
whole array of techniques of you know
of sewing different sewing different
ways even if it's just a needle and
thread
or when the garment itself is totally
done when the shirt has been you know
fixed and you can't do anything more you
rip it up and get all the little pieces
and weave an entirely new piece of
fabric and start over again
it's it's it's like a physical
manifestation
of the idea of impermanence
and the sort of buddhism well it's
simple enough they're two aesthetics two
ways of what is beautiful
one that we have in the west one that um
came out of buddhist thinking in a place
like japan
and it's just interesting i think to
think about because we
you know if you're born into a world we
just assume that the world is the way it
is to what
is actually beautiful is what everyone
tells us is beautiful and what we think
is beautiful
but there are other ways of valuing the
world other ways of seeing the world
non-western ways of seeing the world

what makes our particular moment in history so interesting i think is that you know we've been having encounter with different parts of the world for for centuries now partly unfortunate through the colonial project that the west had which this class hasn't really talked about but could have spent a lot of time talking about unfortunately but be that as it may we we now have an encounter with so many different traditions there's so much to be learned from those traditions so i just tried to lay out a few things here that could be learned from the buddhist tradition as it manifested itself in japan the last few hundred years that could have a real significant impact environmentally in terms of the climate crisis in particular if we if we reconsidered our tradition in light of other traditions this is just one right so just one country i focused on of a whole number of buddhist countries and there's just one tradition we could have focused on hinduism we could have focused on native american spiritualism is a whole lot and i think that's all great right because we we should really um not feel that our tradition is written in stone and you know even though it's impacting the world in a huge way and it's impacting how japan and has been for for quite a while at least 100 years that doesn't mean that we can't renew our culture and learn from other

cultures
and infuse our culture you know with
that
so i guess kind of the argument i'm
making here
the sort of summation of the the whole
western thinking thing
is that you know the next step with
western thinking might be
to be reinvented itself kind of like one
of those pots that is broken
or this sort of patchwork garment where
you have
all these other traditions to come in
and sort of patch us up
with the problems that we've had
environmentally so
you know it's it's the fact is that
they're
you know the west has sort of worlded
over the rest of the world and even
something like
you know japan the west comes plowing in
and so much
you know gets lost but we can't lose
those things because it is those
traditions that can revitalize us
again they can they can make you know
sort of like the garment dude that can
make the west
new in a way that is really needed
environmentally i mean it's just
absolutely essential that
the west reevaluates its its
belief system and and and you know
we're lucky because we're not the only
tradition on the planet there are all
these other traditions
that can you know can can use technique
use the buddhist word but
keeping it clearly the way the tikni
adhon meant it
these other traditions can can help us

reincarnate the west
that the west can be born again
something new
and and i say that you know not that the
west should then take over the whole
planet
um these cultures you know obviously
should
should re-emerge back again whatever
they can and we're seeing that right in
japan with this sort of a modern
um contemporary interest in in japan's
past and how it can be
be saved before it's destroyed but
beyond that i'm saying
that other cultures that don't
necessarily benefit from you know had
the benefit of those traditions
we can benefit from them too and what i
really am thinking here is
this course has been about contemporary
american attitudes toward the
environment
and obviously those have been
problematic
in so many ways the whole western
tradition but but all is not lost
because we have many examples available
to us from across the planet
that that we can you know sort of patch
up
the west just as you would a garment
like that
so i think i think that's why the course
should end here
rather than just having ended with the
west to
to draw attention not just to one
culture in particular buddhism and not
just one particular instance of it in
in japan but to all the traditions
the non-western traditions um it's not a
very good way of putting it makes it

sound like they're the
you know opposite of our tradition but
all the wonderful traditions in the
world
that have existed and including over
time that you know in some sense
seem like they may have been lost and a
lot of these traditions have
but they you know they they can still
live again be reincarnated with the west
into something new
again okay so that's it today
and we're going to actually conclude
maybe somewhere maybe we should have
started there but in 19 and 20
with um an understanding of
environmentally what's going on in the
world today and i'm talking about the
nuts and bolts of like how the climate
crisis works and all
it's um it's an important point i think
you shouldn't leave this class without
having it but
but i'll explain that in detail next
time as to why we're doing that
okay thanks a lot and well see you next
time