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Travel Writing on Screen

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**Cleveland Museum of Art Tours Report:**

**Journeying Beyond Borders to Conceptualize the Exotic**

*Japan and Korea*

* Art includes a wide range of styles and mediums: pottery, sculpture, ink paintings and calligraphy, woodblock prints, Japanese Ukiyo-e paintings. Much of the art viewed during the tour was either a metallic-plated, wood, or ceramic sculptures along with Ukiyo-e paintings placed onto silk or paper.
* Sculptures of the era often seemed to depict mythical deities, noblemen, and figures in positions of power. Japanese culture reflected upon the concept of the warrior, so these figures were depicted fiercely and intimidating. Their abnormally large muscles, razor-edged fangs, and thick body armor imbued an even greater sense of power upon the individual.
* The use of woodblocks in art allowed for the mass reproduction of a single piece. Less workmanship skills and time were required to recreate a painting.
* Ukiyo-e is a genre of art flourished in Japan from the 17th through 19th centuries. It is depictions of the individual on either woodblock prints or paintings, often female beauties or flora and fauna superposed on travel scenes and natural landscapes. Many of this genre's artists wished to suppress outward displays of luxury and as a result, inspired the use of travel scenes and pictures of nature. In the late Edo period, the use of landscape in Ukiyo-e was very popular.
* After briefly looking over the reserved travel books in the Cleveland Museum of Art's public library, it seems that the regions travel writers traded written descriptions for visual depictions. Travel writing seemed to focus about imagery rather than the experience.
* The regions art tells a story. Many of the pieces had writing in addition to the artwork. I know almost nothing about the language, but it seems as if each addition is meant to give the viewer some sort of quick story that explains the image. Artistic scrolls often mimicked this idea. As the scroll unravels, the audience is carried along a continuous storyline.

*Central America*

* Central American art saw distinct changes in style due to the shifts in power between the region's ethnic people.
* The incorporation of animals into the region's art was extremely commonplace throughout Central America. The ethnic people feared, yet respected jaguars' and snakes' power and potential to kill. The region's artwork captured man's dominance over these animals by depicting the ethnic people wearing dangerous-animals' skins.
* The region's ethnic people evidently shared a deep connection to the spiritual. Mythical beings were depicted with jaguar faces and human bodies or long snake tongues, flying two-headed serpents, and decorated priests and priestesses.
* Figures in power were predominantly the major focus in the Central American exhibit. This includes the dangerous animals, the mythical beings, the upper-class, and the shaman. Those in power wore fantastic ceremonial uniforms that reflected upon their class position or worldly being.
* Physical deformations such as Dwarfism were seen as divine symbols of the gods' wills. This concept of praising disease entirely contrasts with *The Motorcycle Diaries*'river segregation scene.
* In comparison with the other two exhibits, Central American art used speech curls. In the other regions, people were depicted as quiet, but the Central Americans almost gave their muses the ability to produce sound. I interpreted these speech curls as a roar or battle cry that shows strength and ferocity.
* Another difference between exhibits, is that artists sometimes included a very visible signature on their work that would identify themselves as the creator.
* Blue, red, and yellow are common colors across centuries of art.
* The regions artwork is much less refined than European or Oriental artwork of the same era. Whereas Italian Renaissance art has an advanced use of detail and realism, Central American art is much more abstract and undetailed. Artists were fond of pattern and border usage.
* The exhibits artwork almost entirely lacked depictions of nature and travel, but were instead directly carved into the Earth of the region, so it’s almost as if the landscape was art. For example, the exhibit shows large carved stone slabs. An even more amazing example of the same concept would be South America's Nazca lines where a vast expanse of the landscape became art.

*Italy*

* Middle Age painters and sculptors tried to give their works a spiritual quality that would often depict a connection between man and his religion (almost entirely Catholicism). Viewers were expected to concentrate on the paintings' and sculptures' deep religious connotations.
* A paradigm shift in philosophical thinking inspires the Renaissance or "rebirth". This humanistic revitalization of classical art saw a transition into increasingly secular paintings and sculptures where realism and the incorporation of ancient Greek and Roman intellect was encouraged.
* Renaissance art depicted the beauty and mystery of the natural world through the eyes of the artist.
* Blue, red, and yellow are common colors across centuries of art.
* The famed Florentine painter Giotto made enormous advances in the technique of representing the human body realistically. His frescoes were said to have decorated cathedrals throughout the city-states of Italy.
* In the early 15th century, the sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti won a major competition to design a new set of bronze doors for the Baptistery of the cathedral of Florence, beating out many of his contemporaries. He thought of this competition as his last chance as an artist.
* Though the Catholic Church remained a major patron of the arts during the Renaissance, works of art were increasingly commissioned by government and wealthy individuals. Much of the art produced during the early Renaissance was commissioned by the wealthy merchant families of Florence, most notably the Medici family.
* Many works of Renaissance art still depict religious images, including subjects such as the Virgin Mary and Christ's twelve apostles. Whereas they are now viewed as great works of art, the depictions were previously used as devotional objects.