

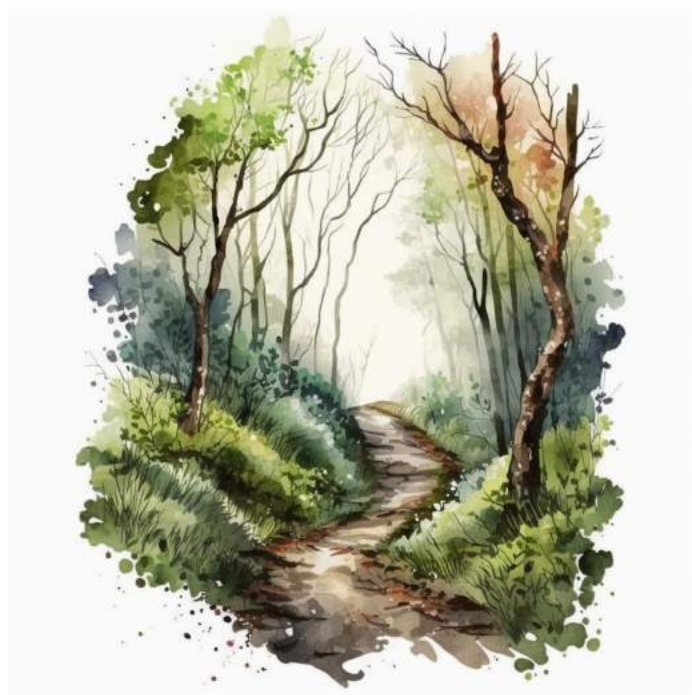
Wabi Sabi

Wabi sabi is a Japanese idea that is about seeing beauty in imperfect, transient things. It's easy to find in nature, especially as the seasons change. Things are rarely perfect, and they never last for very long. We shift round to the next season and everything changes. Even the reflection of the moon in a puddle can be wabi sabi: beautiful, but after a few minutes, the moon has moved in the sky, or cloud has covered it, or the puddle has gone. The idea of wabi sabi encourages us to slow down and notice things.

Wabi sabi can be there in other things too, particularly things that have aged. Tiles that have developed a patina, or wood that has changed colour as it has aged. Fabric can be wabi sabi, when it is worn and faded and takes on a new kind of beauty that it didn't have before.

Mending can also be wabi sabi. Kintsugi is the art of using lacquer and gold dust to mend broken pottery, resulting in the broken thing being more beautiful repaired than it was before it was broken.

If you'd like to read a bit more about wabi sabi, [there's a post I wrote about it here.](#)





The Task

Go out for a walk and take some time to notice things that inspire a feeling of wabi sabi.

I know at the moment in the northern hemisphere, the weather is horrible. Rural Norfolk disappears under a layer of mud in November and December. But I encourage you to wrap up warm and get outside. There will be wabi sabi things to spot, and when you get home it will feel lovely to put the lamps on and sit in a comfy chair with a hot drink!

Some examples of wabi sabi you might see:

- Beautiful leaves. There aren't many left here, but there are still a few.
- Spiders' webs
- Seed heads
- The odd rose still hanging on
- Reflections in water
- The moon, even in the daytime
- Beautiful colours in your neighbours' fence
- Weathered tiles
- Moss and lichen
- Frost patterns

The list isn't exhaustive, so feel free to spot other things!

You might like to take photos or make a list of what you see, but you don't have to. Noticing is enough.





Creative Prompts

- While you are out, collect things that are wabi sabi: leaves, twigs, seed heads, anything you consider to be beautiful.
- Go out when there are puddles or where there is water, and take some time to notice reflections. Try different times of day if you can. It's one way to find enjoyment in wet weather!
- Make bark rubbings or leaf rubbings. Experiment with different sorts of paper and crayon, pencil, charcoal, pastels, or chalk pastels. You might want to use fixative if it's likely to smudge.
- Use visible mending to repair something.
- Find old or worn scraps of fabric. Notice how age has made them more beautiful, by making them softer or the colours more muted.
- Collect, draw, photograph, or represent in some way plants that have reached the end of their growing season (or have just started it if you are in the southern hemisphere!)
- If you manage to collect some bits and pieces, consider what it is you find beautiful about them, and try to represent that one element in some way. It might be the colour, texture, lines or patterns.
- If you have pieces of worn fabric, consider how you might join them to make something beautiful.
- Use a piece of worn fabric in a slow stitching project.
- Read or listen to *Bittersweet* by Susan Cain.

Try some journaling on the theme of wabi sabi. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- “This too shall pass”
- “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well”.
- How do you feel about things changing?
- What are the positive things about getting older? With this one I would be half tempted to say, “Nothing!” and leave it there! But I don’t actually think that’s true. There are definitely some things that get better as we get older.

