

Essence of Japan, A Coloring Journey

Joyce Yoshihara Will

Artistic Will Designs

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Like a travel account that invites outside observation, these coloring sheets include famous sites and personal observations; they are suited to novices and experienced colorists alike.

Joyce Yoshihara Will's coloring book *Essence of Japan, A Coloring Journey* is a scenic tour of the people, locations, and culture of Japan.

The book features famous sites from Japan's Narita, Tokyo, Kawaguchi, and Takayama Prefectures, including the Imperial Palace and Mount Fuji, as well as lesser-known subjects. Its thirty images for coloring in are hand-drawn representations of Will's photographs, and they are both pleasant and personal. There are beautiful images of the sort that might have become postcards, but also those specific to Will's experiences, including a picture of a woman in a kimono interacting with two human-looking robots.

With images that are both grand and impressive and those that are closer and detailed, the book strikes a delicate balance that extends to its ratios of people, places, and things. An image of the Narita-san Gateway is followed by a picture of four Buddhist monks and a page of Kimono-style patterns. The book's images of a statue of two Fighting Samurai Frogs and a group of Maneki Neko ("Beckoning Cats") are whimsical, while its pictures of Koinobori Flags (Koi Streamers) and manhole covers with intricate designs are a reminder of the happy accidents and unexpected sights that come with travel and of beauty that's happened upon—like a travel account that invites outsiders to observe. Together, the pictures capture a sense of peace and harmony in a limited space.

Some of the book's pages will take a few minutes to color, while others—especially those with many patterns and small, detailed areas—may take hours. A variety of textures are depicted, from stone and wood to skin, fabric, and flowers. The book is suited both to experienced colorists and newcomers to the hobby; a test page includes tips on best practices, like placing a sheet of cardboard behind each page to prevent ink bleeding.

There are no captions on the image pages; alone, they encourage wonder and mystery, while a guide at the book's end includes smaller versions of the images and brief, accompanying descriptions, imparting a more thorough understanding of the elements of Japanese culture that are covered.

The relaxing, enjoyable coloring book *Essence of Japan, A Coloring Journey* is an excellent sampler that draws on a trip to Japan.

PETER DABBENE (September 21, 2020)

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