



The art of imperfection

Exploring notions of unconventional beauty through photography



Wabi-sabi is a philosophy of design – and of life – that values the beauty of things imperfect and incomplete. It's an ethos Emma Bass stumbled across almost by accident but has since inspired a new creative direction and hundreds of enigmatic images.

"I needed to create a floral arrangement for the background of a photoshoot," says Emma. "I'd hastily created an arrangement with some flowers that were past their best. Afterwards I was struck by their loveliness and photographed it. When friends later commented on the image's unexpected appeal it started me thinking about conventional concepts of beauty – and the role of physical decay and natural wear and tear."

Western ideas of beauty can be all about the perfection of youth, says Emma. "Wabi-sabi suggests that imperfection adds

to visual appeal, and it embraces flaws as beautiful because they're true to life. It's a notion that's relevant to all life, including our ageing bodies and the changing world we live in."

And what better form to explore these ideas in than wilting flowers. As Andrew Junipe puts it in *Wabi Sabi: The Japanese Art of Impermanence*, there's something in a flower arrangement that reflects our lot as humans. "A flower just coming into blossom can signify the force of life, while a vase may be split showing the signs of decay ... Something within us is touched by the knowledge that we, too, are part of the coming and going of life, and as certainly as we've enjoyed the vigor of youth, we will grow older and move toward the winter years."

Imperfect: Black Asterisk Gallery
May 5-20, 10 Ponsonby Rd, Auckland

Wabi-sabi is about the delicate balance
between the pleasure we get from things
and the pleasure we get from freedom
from things -LEONARD KOREN

