**Passion + Patience = Purpose**

#### Ikigai, 生き甲斐, is the Japanese term for a reason to get up in the morning – a passion, a purpose, something one lives for.

#### Associate professor Akira R. Takemoto has framed his life around this principle, sharing his passion for Japanese literature, art and aesthetics with students and anyone interested in understanding more about Japanese culture. His zeal led him to study the art of chanoyu (tea serving) in 1975. He earned his tea serving teaching certificate in 1982 and designed the Chikurakken tea room at Whitman in 2009.

#### After 30 years at Whitman, Takemoto discovered another way to share his knowledge of Japanese culture.

#### Sharing an Ancient Tradition

#### Mokuhanga was first brought to Japan during the Edo period (1603-1868). Before that woodblock printing was used for centuries in China. Although used as a medium to print sutra texts and then secular books, Mokuhanga was also used to produce art.

#### “You can’t cut out woodblock prints from this entire history of Japanese aesthetics,” Takemoto said, “Japanese aesthetics is layered so there is so many ideas that are coming along, but you can see how they are connected.”

In 2014, Takemoto and Keiko Hara, professor of art emerita, produced Whitman’s first ever Mokuhanga exhibit in the Sheehan Gallery.

“We thought normally when people hear the word woodblock print, all they think about is the pictures of the floating world that come out of the Edo period,” he said. “And what we wanted to do is say ‘Yes, that’s what happened in the Edo period, but it didn’t stop.’”

The Abstract American Mokuhanga exhibit received positive reviews from art press in NYC, Japan and Europe. The exhibit also caught the attention of the Ministry of Education in Japan who granted Takemoto funds to develop a woodblock center.

Takemoto and Hara used part of those funds to create a mokuhanga workshop in Olin Hall. Now in its third year, the mokuhanga workshop has gained traction attracting visitors to Whitman and Walla Walla from across the country.

#### Creating Art

#### The technique of mokuhanga creates a world in which passion and patience becomes an artform if one is to achieve their final goal.

#### Mokuhanga begins with a plank of wood. Using a set of carving tools, an image is meticulously etched into the wood block. The image is drawn onto a washi, Japanese paper, then glued face-down using bamboo paste. Colors are then painted on the wood using brushes. A baren, a flat hand-held tool traditionally constructed from bamboo leaves, is pressed against the paper and the inked wood block creating an impression. Mokuhanga is no paint by numbers as this process is repeated several times in order to create the print.

#### Takemoto welcomed famed Mokuhanga artist Tuula Moilanen to instruct this year’s eager participants. Moilanen is known as an expert in Mokuhanga and lived in Kyoto, Japan for over 20 years before returning home to Finland in 2012 where she currently lives and works.

#### The workshop ran from June 10 to June 17, and participants traveled from Seattle, North Carolina, Washington D.C., Pennsylvania and even Walla Walla to receive Moilanen’s knowledge and create woodblock prints.

#### The sessions were broken up into two sessions, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Each morning Moilanen provided a presentation on the technique before the sessions began. Following Moilanen’s presentation, the budding Mokuhanga artists broke off into smaller groups. Moilanen traveled room to room giving each participant personalized attention and mentorship.

#### On the final day of the workshop, participants received certificates of completion and shared their finished art with the group. Each participant left a piece of him/herself behind as they donated one of their prints to the growing Whitman College Mokuhanga Collection.

#### Planting Seeds

#### This year the workshop included the opening Hooves on the Move an exhibit of Moilanen’s work at Sheehan Gallery. The exhibit remained on display from June 7 to June 30.

#### Along with Moilanen’s works, located in the main room of the gallery, works from the 2016 and 2017 Mokuhanga workshops were also on display bringing the last four years full circle.

#### “It’s just a window into Japanese culture, Japanese aesthetics,” Takemoto said. “You won’t understand everything. But you can see how all the work in the gallery echo each other in terms of ideas, in terms of techniques, and that’s what I’m interested in.”

#### Mokuhanga was once practiced solely by Buddhist monks. Since the technique involves repetitive steps and takes a tremendous amount of grace, Takemoto hopes that the lessons learned in creating this art can be applied to the everyday lives of those who learn the art of Japanese woodblock print.

#### “Mokuhanga or any art is about touching the universe,” he said. “How do you interact with the universe? And the more you interact and see the universe, then the more interesting the work of art becomes.”