Sac State celebrates five years of the ‘Way of Tea’

Part classroom. Part cultural center. Part meditative study. Sacramento State’s Sokiku Nakatani Tea Room and Garden celebrated its fifth anniversary Friday, June 8, with the 197th ceremony in the room.

A gathering of invited guests filled the tea room, which is divided into a platform for the tatami area, where the initial tea is prepared, and a viewing area for seated guests.

Small, critically placed video cameras and a large-screen television give the audience an up-close look at the preparation and ceremony. Large windows along one wall treat participants to a view of the adjoining Japanese garden.

Chado – the Way of Tea – is a centuries-old Japanese practice of preparing, serving and drinking tea, using painstaking steps to produce a simple and elegant experience that reflects the principles of harmony, respect, purity and tranquility.

Opened in June 2007, Sacramento State’s tea room was built with funds from an anonymous donor. It is named in honor of the late Sokiku Nakatani, a longtime resident of the Sacramento region who later moved to Los Angeles, where she began her formal study of Chado. The tea room is one of only a few situated on an American college campus.

Tim Fong, chair of the University’s Ethnic Studies Department, was one of many people who worked tirelessly to develop the tea room five years ago. “It’s just been amazing how many events have taken place here – how lush the garden is,” he said during the anniversary ceremony.

Hosting the ceremony was Madame Sosei Matsumoto, a renowned master of Chado who conducted the room’s first ceremony in 2007. She lauded not just the ceremony but also the benefits of the hot beverage. “Tea is good for you. I’m 92 years old,” she said.

In addition to preserving the tradition of Chado, the room demonstrates the relevance of Chado to academic disciplines such as history, art, literature and philosophy. It also links the University and the community through programs, exhibits and lectures, and it has a collection of tea ware items.
The Sokiku Nakatani Tea Room and Garden is on the lower level of the University Library's north side. For more information about the facility, visit www.library.csus.edu/tearoom or call (916) 278-5954. For media assistance, call Sacramento State's Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156.

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