

Shaping Our Lives

Timeless Wisdom from the Japanese Arts
for Modern Life

MUSUBI
ACADEMY

July 9 – October 1 2025

“Through a bowl of tea, peace can spread.
The peacefulness from a bowl of tea can be shared
and become the foundation for a way of life.”

— Soshitsu Sen XV

“Your senses link you intimately with the divine
within and around you.”

— John O'Donohue



Integration Workbook

Introduction

Here you are.

Here we are — on the other side of Module 1.

Three sessions completed and three more modules to go on our shared journey into the wisdom of the Japanese arts. Exploring how we can allow it to inform how we meet ourselves and the world more fully.

In Module 1, you've experienced an immersion into the Way of Tea — a space where stillness meets form, where offering and receiving become one gesture, and where presence is cultivated not through thinking, but through doing.

Both Dairik and Katsuhito shared how ultimately for them Tea is about cultivating peace. In ourselves, in connection to others, and in connection to the world we inhabit.

Something we all yearn for, and something the world is in (desperate) need of.

This workbook is here to further support your process of integration.

Its pages offer:

- Reflections on the themes and teachings from the module
- Inquiries to support you in bringing these insights into daily life

You've already taken part in the learning. What follows is a chance to slow down, get curious, and listen for what stayed with you that you'd like to carry forward.

Together, we'll return to teachings on harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility — the values that guide the Way of Tea — as well as explore qualities like lingering awareness (*zanshin*), beginner's mind (*shoshin*), and the quiet art of leaving your heart in a gesture (*kokoro wo nokosu*).

I hope it offers a space to return to what feels meaningful, to clarify what is taking root, and to notice how the teachings can support you to meet life fully.



Becoming Present

Let's begin with becoming present.

Align your body into a relaxed, but alert and upright position.

Take a full, deep in breath,
and allow it to fill your body and being.

Now allow the air and any excess tension you're holding
to flow out on the out breath.

Repeat that one or two more times,
until you feel relaxed, clear and present.

Until you feel settled and at home in your body.

Open and curious.

Now, tune into the impact of the first module and your time with Dairik,
Katsuhito and the other participants.

Bring curiosity and openness to how these past weeks and the teachings you
have absorbed are living inside of you right now.

After all **this is your journey** and the teachers are your guides as you
discover what is most true and helpful for you.

Integration Questions

The four questions below are meant to help you attune to and clarify what this module has opened, stirred, or awakened for you.

Write freely. Let the words come from your lived experience, not just your thoughts.

You may want to sit down with a cup of tea as you begin ;)

What did Tea teach you — about yourself, about attention, about relationship?

What has shifted or is shifting for you as a result?

What insight or experience stood out most to you from Module 1?

How will you allow this learning to flow through you and translate in how you show up, and interact with the world?




Wonderful!

It's my sincere hope that on top of feeling grounded in new distinctions, awareness and practices, you also feel a little cracked open.

That the course guides you into a space of curiosity, discovery and not-knowing. A state of openness and alertness.

More connected to the mystery that is this moment.
To the mystery that is you.

A photograph of a traditional Japanese garden. In the foreground, a wooden walkway with a railing leads towards a building with a tiled roof. To the left, a small stream flows over rocks, surrounded by lush greenery and trees with autumn foliage in shades of red, orange, and yellow. The scene is peaceful and serene.

“When we slow down, what we find is not less—but more.
More subtlety, more connection, more life.”

— Katsuhito Imaizumi

Setting the Foundation: The Way of Tea

“The principles of the way of tea are directed
toward all of one’s existence.”

— Soshitsu Sen XV

The Way of Tea offered a foundation from which to move forward, introducing several of the themes and threads that will run through the whole program. So they deepen as they recur and are presented in different ways.

Under the skilled guidance of contemporary tea masters Dairik and Katsuhito we entered a living tradition shaped by presence, attunement, and care.

The Way of Tea could also be seen as an art of attunement. A very refined and precise way to become more intimate with ourselves, the objects we handle, the space we inhabit, and those we share things with.

To attune not just with our mind, but with all our senses, and ultimately our spirit. Shifting and shaping the quality of presence we are able to bring to each encounter.

The module introduced us to Tea’s foundational values, refined and creative practices, its deep connection to Zen, and the way Tea can return us to what truly matters. Helping us see the fullness and beauty of what is already there, if only we notice.

In the next section, we’ll revisit a few of the core teachings from Module 1.

While not every teaching from the sessions is captured here, what follows are some of the key pieces we hope you carry forward.

Wa, Kei, Sei, Jaku – The Four Pillars of Tea

The Way of Tea is built upon four foundational values:

Wa (和) – Harmony

Kei (敬) – Respect

Sei (清) – Purity

Jaku (寂) – Tranquility

Wa 和 – Harmony

Harmony is living in rhythm with nature — both outer and inner.

It isn't about removing contrast, but allowing opposites to sit side by side: light and dark, high and low, yin and yang. Helping us recognize our deeper relationship with the universe.

Harmony arises when we attune to what's here, rather than trying to shape it into something else. In tea, harmony is felt in silence, in timing, and in relationship.

*“In nature, there is no duality. Opposing elements coexist
—high and low, pleasant and unpleasant, yin and yang.
So these contrasts sit together naturally.”*

– Dairik Amae

Whether tending to his garden in Kyoto or recalling the quiet of the ocean in Hawaii, Dairik invited us to notice where we already feel in harmony: in a cup of tea, in nature, in silence.

Kei 敬 – Respect

Respect lives in the way we meet the world. Recognizing the innate dignity of others, objects, and our shared world with a sincere heart.

A bow to the guest, how we care for each tool. These small gestures express reverence — not just for others, but for each object, each moment. Even the tools carry wisdom.

When we move with care, we show we are listening. “Every object has a life.” To respect is to let things be what they are, not what we want them to be.

Dairik reminded us that reverence is not reserved for elders or masters; it’s a quality of presence we offer to people, objects, and life itself.

Through the practice of Temae, he invited us to draw on wa and kei as we attune to the deeper story or layers that are present in every object we encounter, if only we pay attention.

Of course this extends beyond objects to people and everything in existence. Everything is unique and can only exist because of countless conditions that allow it to be just as it is.

Kei invites us to honor and respect this truth of simultaneous uniqueness and interconnection.

Sei 清 – Purity

Purity is the feeling of freshness that comes from wiping away what is no longer needed. It’s not about being clean — it’s about clearing space.

“It also refers to cleansing our mind and heart of dust and preconceptions.

This practice brings a sense of freshness and renewal.”

– Dairik Amae

A morning sip of water. Opening a window. A breath that clears space inside.

Through practices like gently wiping a table or symbolically “wiping away” the labels we place on ourselves—our name, roles, preferences—we reconnect with something deeper and more essential.

Dairik taught that in tea, wiping the cloth or folding the fukusa is not about removing dirt. “It’s not about cleaning,” he said, “it’s about clearing.” Clearing the mind. Clearing space. Returning to freshness.

Purification is not something we do once at the beginning. It is constant. It’s in how we move. How we drink. How we transition.

To purify, then, is to create a field for presence. A way of returning to the center again and again — not perfectly, but sincerely. It is the art of softening the mind, quieting the edges, and making space for the sacredness of the ordinary.

Jaku 寂 – Tranquility

“Jaku means tranquility. It is a natural state that arises when the other three pillars are practiced. The distinction between self and others begin to dissolve or blur, and there’s a quiet openness —beyond words or logic.”

In this stillness, there’s no need to be anything more. Just presence. Just awareness. Just being here together. Sensitive to the sacred essence of all that is around us.

Dairik spoke of how we tend to, “see reality through our preconceptions. By wiping away, we experience it directly. And in that space, jaku—a quiet awareness—can naturally arise.” It is a “quiet awareness” that reminds us of our deep interconnectedness.

These four values are not confined to the tea room. They are a way of showing up — at home, in conversation, while washing a cup or entering a meeting. Each moment becomes an invitation: to relate with harmony, to act with care, to clear what's in the way, and to rest in a deeper stillness.

How could you let these four values guide how you move through your day?



Shoshin - Beginner's Mind

Meeting Each Moment as New

As Dairik pointed out, Tea and Zen share the same taste.

You can taste Zen through the Way of Tea.

In his second session he introduced us to the deep connection between the two and their common essence. Sharing how both invite us to empty our cup so something new and fresh can come in.

I loved how he shared that for him Zen is similar to being in endless freefall, with no beginning, no ending and nothing to cling to. Things simply come and go.

Meeting life fully as it unfolds and being truly present to its ever-changing nature.

Neither stuck in fear or anxiety, nor in a blissed out peaceful state.

Fully alive, and not overly attached to the labels and concepts we tend to attach to ourselves and others. The same labels that often prevent us from seeing their truer and deeper nature.

Being empty of those labels and concepts is actually true fullness. It's what allows us to be fully present and free.

Shoshin 初心, or beginner's mind, is the quality of meeting a moment as if for the first time—even when it's familiar, even when we've done it a thousand times. It asks for openness, curiosity, and presence without assumption.

Dairik brought this to life when he said:

*“Even when you’ve practiced a form for 30 years,
you never pour tea the same way twice.
The temperature of the water is different. The light is different.
The guest is different. You are different.”*

In this spirit, the form becomes a living practice. It’s not fixed choreography—it’s a space to meet what is present. The gesture of pouring tea doesn’t become automatic; it becomes attentive. And that attentiveness keeps the moment alive.

Beginner’s mind also asks us to notice how quickly we reach for conclusions.

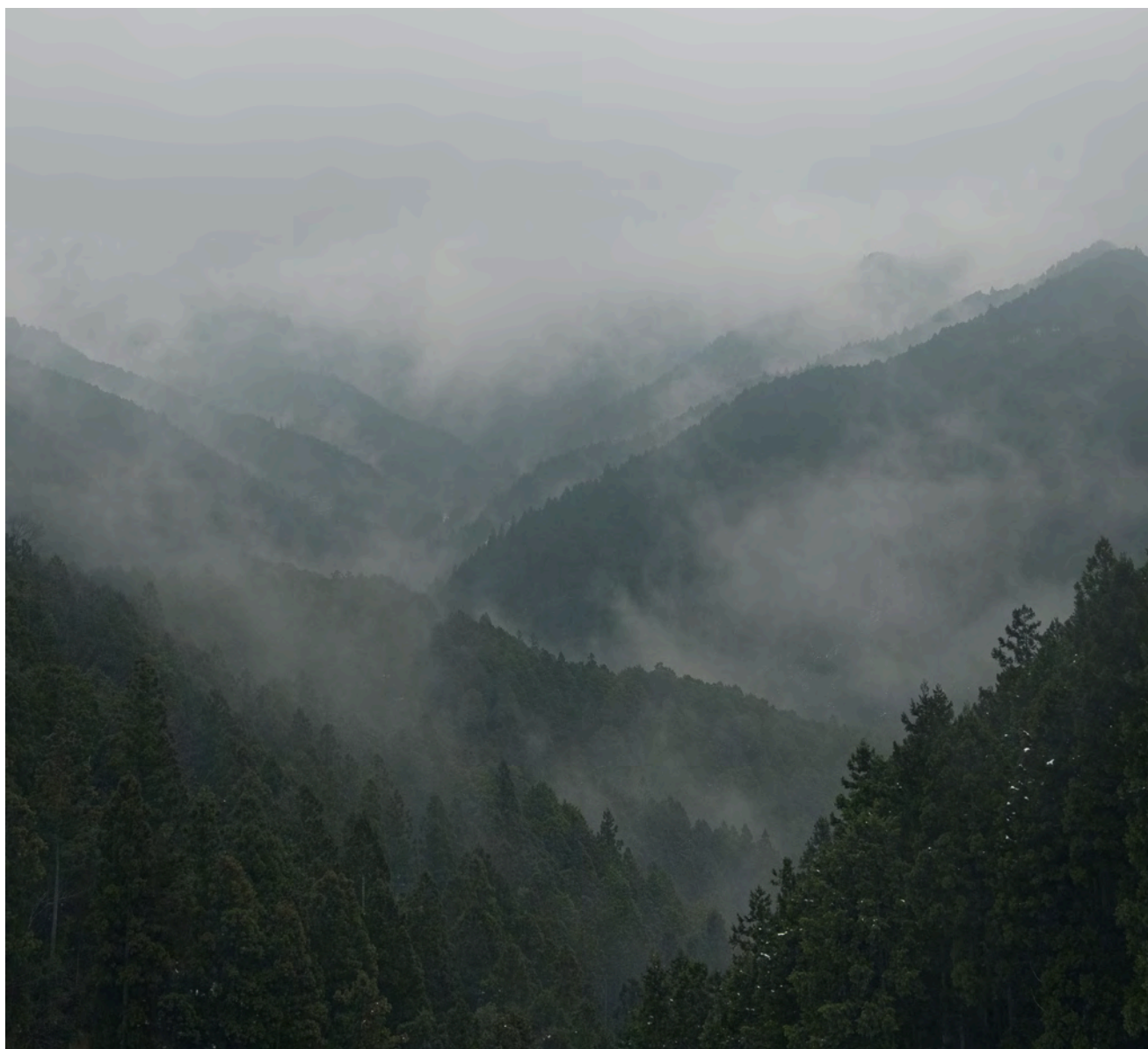
In one practice with Katsuhito, we were invited to touch different surfaces—wood, cloth, ceramic—and describe them with attention. Without rushing. Without labeling. This revealed how quickly the mind seeks to categorize, and how gently we can return to sensation instead.

Beginner’s mind doesn’t ask us to forget what we’ve learned. It asks us to meet what’s here without relying on our preconceptions, so that our experience can deepen and evolve. It reminds us that even repetition can offer revelation when we meet it with sincerity.

**Where in your life are you quick to jump to conclusions or fixed beliefs?
What might happen if you let those go and approached it with a beginner’s mind?**

“When the words and ideas that describe reality fall away, all that remains is reality itself.”

— John Daido Looi Roshi



Awakening the Senses

Perceiving the World With Presence and Wonder

When we meet the moment without assumption, we become available to perceive it fully.

Beginner's mind softens our expectations — and in that openness, the senses begin to wake. Throughout the sessions with Katsuhito and Dairik, we were invited again and again to engage not only with our thoughts, but with our bodies, textures, tones, and impressions. To feel. To see. To taste. To listen with our whole attention.

Awakening the senses is not about stimulation or intensity. It is about attunement and subtlety. As Dairik noted, “Things become more beautiful the closer we look, the more slowly we move.” When we slow down, texture emerges. When we stop naming everything, the world reveals itself differently.

We experienced this in the mindful drinking practice. Taking a sip, observing how the liquid touches the lip, where the temperature changes, the way it travels down the throat. Each aspect, often rushed past, became part of the experience. The ordinary turned luminous through attention.

Katsuhito spoke of the importance of silence, and how it “is also a sound”.

Through silence, we realize the presence of sound.

He invited us to close our eyes and notice that even when sound disappears, presence remains. This kind of silence awakens the inner sense — the ability to perceive not only what is loud or bright, but what is quiet, subtle, and still.

And in these moments of deep, open attention, something more than observation can arise. Imaizumi introduced the phrase *kokoro wo ugokasu* — “to be moved in the heart.”

If you allow yourself; it comes when you are touched by something simple, alive, and real — the curve of a leaf, the softness of cloth, a sound disappearing into quiet. Wonder arises when the world is given space to enter you.

Again, when we empty ourselves, true fullness emerges spontaneously.

Awakening the senses does not require special settings or rare moments. It can happen in the way you wash a cup, how you open a door, how you notice the smell of the air when you step outside. The invitation is not to add anything — but to allow what’s already there to come alive in your awareness.

“If you open your senses, you can always find beauty. It’s about how you approach the world.”

— Katsuhito Imaizumi

What helps you to awaken your senses and attune to the beauty of the world in a small but profound way?



Shu-Ha-Ri

The Arc of Embodied Learning

Dairik introduced Shu-Ha-Ri as a way of understanding the stages of practice and mastery that is commonly used in the traditional Japanese arts.

It describes how we move through discipline and form as a living, evolving relationship to learning. This path is not linear — it is lived. Each stage folds into the next, often circling back, deepening over time.

守 Shu — “Protect” or “Obey”

This is the stage of preservation. We begin by faithfully imitating the form. In the Way of Tea, this means bowing as shown, folding the cloth just so, pouring with precision. We don't yet need to understand why — we simply follow. Through repetition, the body begins to remember. The form protects us, and we protect the form.

破 Ha — “Break” or “Detach”

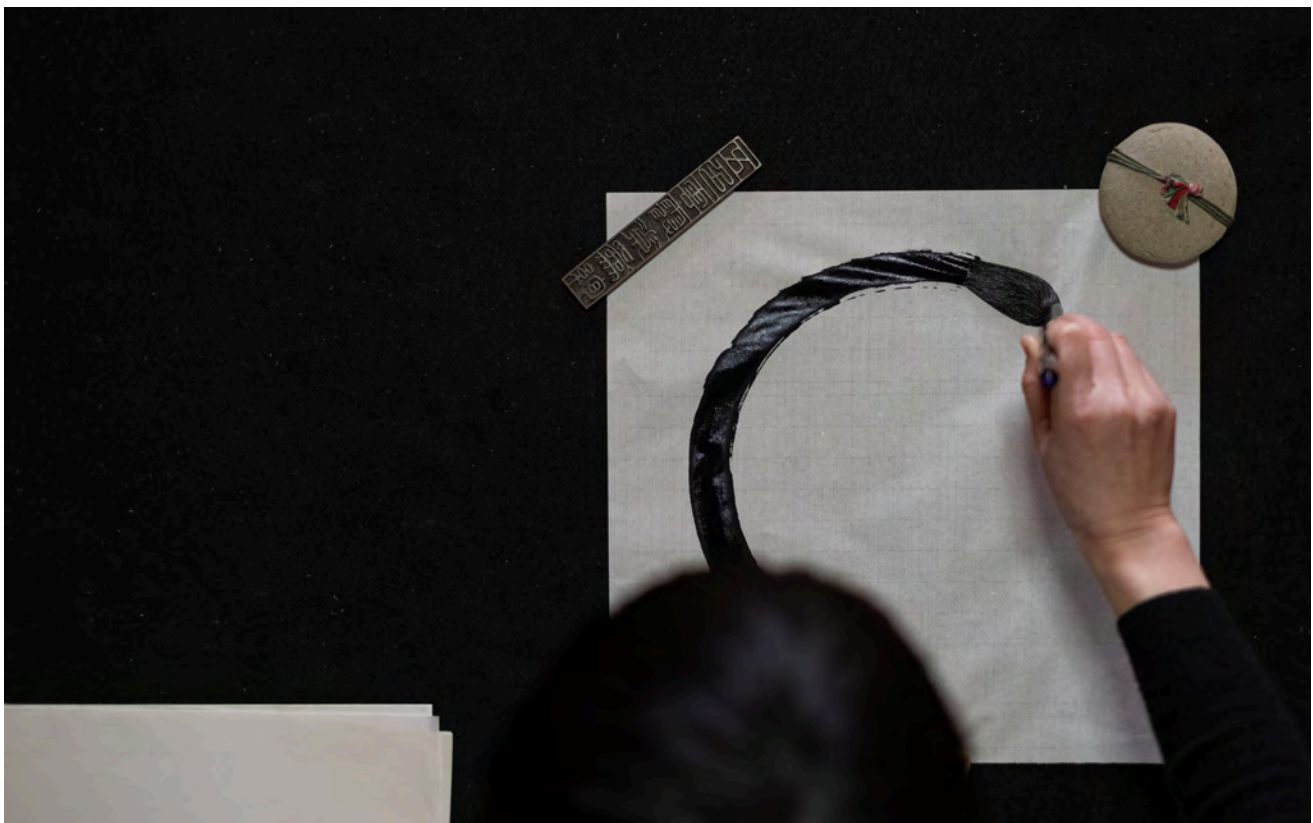
Over time, something within begins to stir. We notice not just how, but why we move. We begin to sense where the form resonates and where it resists. Ha is the stage of exploration and rebellion. The accumulated training offers a foundation to develop one's own unique approach. We are able to hold the rules and forms more freely and our gestures become more our own.

離 Ri — “Leave” or “Transcend”

Eventually, the form dissolves into freedom. There is no longer a distinction between you and the movement, between technique and expression. The practitioner leaves behind the formal structure, expressing the essence of the art freely and intuitively, unbound by form.

Shu-Ha-Ri offers a way to understand how we learn anything deeply — through embodied relationship, curiosity, and eventual release.

What's an area of your life where the natural flow from one stage to the next has stagnated? What could you do to bring that flow and natural progression back?



Zanshin

Lingering Awareness, Leaving the Heart Behind

“When parting from anything, let it be with the feeling of parting from a beloved.”

— Sen no Rikyu

Zanshin 残心 is the lingering quality of attention — the awareness that stays, even after the action ends. In the Way of Tea, this is not just about what we do, but how we remain.

In his session Katsuhito invited us to feel this directly through the practice of drinking tea. Not just the sip itself, but the moment after. The return. The stillness that follows.

When you lift the bowl, you notice its weight and warmth. But zanshin is felt in the release — in how you place it back down, in the breath that follows, in the silence you share.

This awareness lingers like a thread — a soft connection that stays present. It invites us to slow the ending of things, to notice the spaces in between, and to honor the traces left behind.

This lingering presence is beautifully echoed in the phrase *kokoro wo nokosu* (心を残す) — “to leave the heart behind.” Imaizumi offered this expression to describe the subtle trace we leave in the world when we move through it with sincerity.

Zanshin invites us to carry this thread of awareness through everything we do.

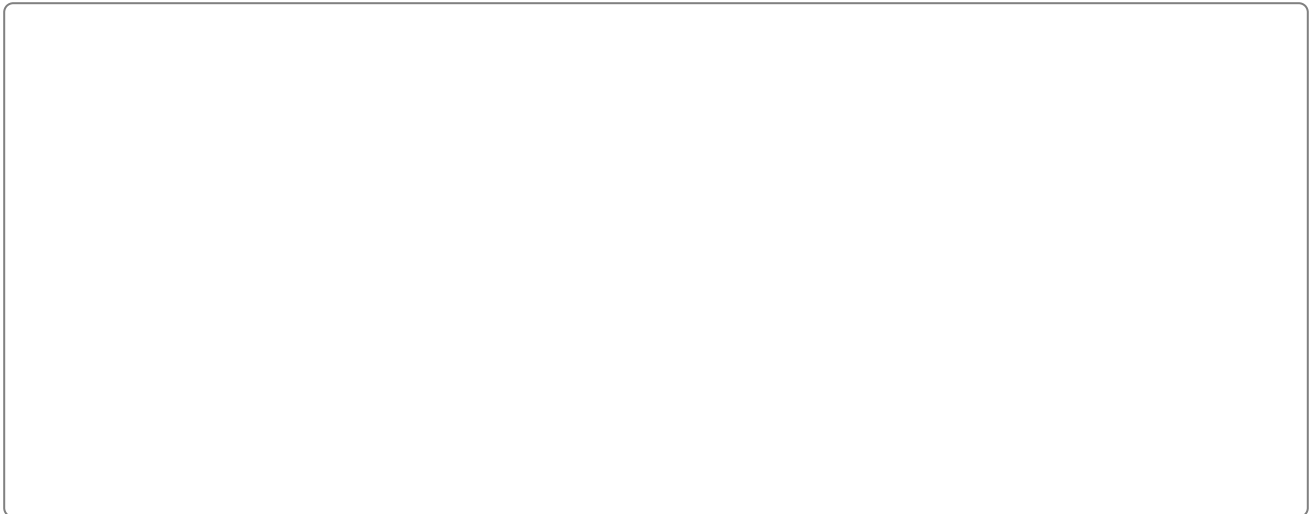
Whether pouring tea, sending an email, or sharing a word with someone — we ask,

What remains after I act?

What is the quality I leave in the space?

In this way, every action becomes a seed of presence. Every moment, a chance to let the heart linger.

As you look back on the first module, how would you describe the after taste or lingering awareness it has left for you?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a user to write their response to the question above.

The Journey Ahead

More richness was explored and experienced. And more goodness is yet to come.

Yet I trust that for now you have enough.

Soon, you'll embark with Mayuka san into the world of ikebana and how it offers a different doorway into attunement, embodied presence, and restoring a sense of wonder at the beauty that is there as we move through our days.

I would like to close with Katsuhito's parting note, that captured the essence in a beautiful way. A text printed on a hoodie of one of his tea masters:

“Think about why you started.”

As we move through life, it's easy to either be pulled by the fast pace and forward momentum of our lives and culture, or to settle into a level of familiarity and comfort that is pleasant but that can lack vitality.

Returning to why we do what we do and what truly moves our heart is essential.

Even if the answer doesn't come quickly or easily, just being with that inquiry with gentleness and curiosity is nourishing.

And perhaps it returns us to our own form of beginner's mind.

As the poet Taigu Ryōkan wrote in his poem No Mind:

*With no mind, flowers lure the butterfly;
With no mind, the butterfly visits the blossoms.*

*Yet when flowers bloom, the butterfly comes;
When the butterfly comes, the flowers bloom.*

We'll meet you in the next module.

With appreciation,
Laurens van Aarle

Founder & Program Director



Ikebana

Learning to Listen to the Voice of the World



Mayuka Yamazaki

Ikebana begins with listening—not shaping. You’ll explore how attunement, presence, and letting go awaken your senses and open you to wonder.

Through the simple act of arranging flowers, you’ll learn to co-create with nature and reconnect to life’s subtle voice. Ikebana becomes more than art—it becomes a practice of self-discovery and transformation.

Guided by **Mayuka Yamazaki**, you will step into Ikebana as a living relationship with nature. Her teaching opens a pathway to listening with the senses—allowing the voice of the flower to lead the way. In witnessing a live arrangement and creating your own, you’ll explore how form, beauty, and balance reflect your own way of being.

Mayuka brings forward the wonder that arises through humility and care, showing how arranging flowers can become a mirror for how we place ourselves in the world.

Craft

Embracing Uncertainty & Thinking Long-Term



**Takafumi
Kawakami**



Takahiro Yagi



**Hosai
Matsubayashi**

Craft is a meditation in motion—one that teaches patience, humility, and responsibility across time. Through the eyes of a Zen priest and two master artisans, you'll uncover how making with care can shift your sense of self, deepen presence, and open new ways to navigate uncertainty. You'll learn from those who shape clay and metal not just with their hands, but with a mindset shaped by generations.

Rev. Takafumi Kawakami opens this module with a deep exploration of identity as relational and fluid. Through Buddhist insight and contemplative practice, you'll experience how awareness of connection brings a shift in how we relate to life. **Takahiro Yagi** shares a path shaped by legacy and innovation, offering a vision of leadership grounded in care, respect, and responsibility. **Hosai Matsubayashi XVI** encourages trust in the unknown through craft that holds memory and wisdom across time. Together, these sessions offer a long-view approach to creativity, rooted in presence and continuity.

Aikido

Harmonizing Self, Others and the World



**Richard
Strozzi-Heckler**

The Japanese martial art of Aikido invites you to meet tension not with force, but with flow. You'll explore how to return to center under pressure, align intention with action, and embody the wisdom of harmony in the movement of your everyday life.

Through practices drawn from the body, you'll begin to experience the power of non-separation, and reclaim a sense of inner alignment and aliveness.

Richard Strozzi-Heckler invites you to experience Aikido as a living practice of centering. You'll explore what it means to embody stability, presence, and flow—especially when facing pressure. Through attention to posture, breath, and rhythm, you'll sense how presence can become a steady ground for life.

The principle of musubi—joining in relationship—offers a way of engaging that creates alignment rather than division. These sessions open the body and mind to a deeper intelligence that supports clarity, responsiveness, and integrity in motion.

“I ask you to see the world as if you might lose
your sight tomorrow,

to hear as if you might lose your hearing,
to touch, smell, and taste as if it's your last chance.

Use your senses fully -
praise the beauty and joy the world offers.”

— Hellen Keller

