

# CAPTURE NATURE'S BEAUTY WITH INK PAINTING

It's 6 pm. on Wednesday, and students at Providence RECenter are learning the centuries-old art of Japanese ink painting known as sumi-e. As in many Japanese arts and traditions, simplicity and subtlety are the hallmarks of sumi-e. Those who master it breathe life into their silk or rice-paper paintings using only black ink, a few, simple brush strokes and a lot of concentration.

"You think it's very simple, then realize the tiniest little movement can make a difference," said student Deb Kempton who was curious about the class and decided to try it. "It's different than other kind of painting. It's a restful and relaxing kind of art."

Instructor Yoshiko Oishi Weick is an accomplished sumi-e artist with three decades of experience whose works have been displayed in galleries and exhibitions around the world. Her grayscale paintings are inspired by her profound love of nature and what she considers her spiritual gift for capturing the beauty of nature in black and white.

"I constantly believe that nature is beautiful, life is beautiful, love is beautiful" said Oishi Weick, a former Wesley Theological Seminary artist in residence on the American University campus. "In sumi-e, you make [the illusion of] color with different techniques, hues, strokes and textures."

This calming and centering art form was first brought to Japan from China by Zen Buddhist monks trained in the art of concentration, clarity, and simplicity. Mastering the nuances of the black sumi-e ink was more difficult than painting with color and required consummate skill.

Using the same materials today as were used thousands of years ago, sumi-e artists use contrast and harmony to create paintings that embody the spirit of the natural world.

This contemplative art form is about taking a deep look at an object or scene and leaving only what is necessary to capture its essence.

"It's hard to get the nuances of the brushes," Kempton said as she practiced brush-stroke techniques during a class warm-up exercise. "The strokes are never the same twice. It's like the box of chocolates – you never know what you're going to get."

That's the beauty of this art. Even when a stroke or painting doesn't go as planned, the results can still be wonderful.

The Park Authority offers a wide range of art classes for all skill levels. To find a class near you, turn to the Fine Arts section.

