I was honored to represent Hobart and William Smith Colleges on the 2005 Technos International Study Tour. A visit to Japan has long ranked high on my lifelong list of things to do, and the generosity of the Tanaka foundation and the faculty and students of Technos College exceeded my wildest dreams. There were far too many wonderful sights and experiences to mention, but my students, Monty Barkauskas and Kate Goodrich, both extolled the fabulous food and the Midori-No-Mura spa! I must agree.
William Smith student Kate Goodrich was also selected to model one of the fabulous kimonos at Technos College!

I am especially grateful to Stephen Fleming, whose knowledge, organizational skills, and sense of humor all contributed to the success of this tour.

I would also like to note that the faculty group became particularly close. We all got along very well, and by the end of the trip we had become friends. I believe that my students became equally close to their Japanese hosts.
Japanese Architecture and Design

I applied to represent Hobart and William Smith Colleges on the 2005 Technos International Study Tour to learn about Japanese architecture, and I learned a great deal from this tour. As a historian of art and architecture, I was fully aware of Japan’s rich history of architecture, especially in cultural centers such as Kyoto and Ise. Traditional Japanese architecture has had significant influence on Western architecture, and particularly on the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. Yet, Japan also has one of the most vibrant contemporary architecture scenes in the world today, known through the work of architects such as Arata Isozaki, Tadeo Ando, and Kenzo Tange.

While I have included some material on traditional and contemporary Japanese architecture in my introductory and upper-level classes, I have never felt knowledgeable enough to do justice to the material. I had read books on Japanese architecture, but I teach best what I have experienced directly. As an architect, I need to experience the culture, the space, and the scale of the built environment. This tour gave me a more profound understanding of Japanese architecture, and has allowed me to teach it in far greater depth.

The 2005 Technos International Study Tour afforded me many opportunities to see examples of both traditional and contemporary Japanese architecture, including buildings by Ando, Tange, and Isozaki. I took over 500 photographs of Japanese architecture and design, giving me an image library invaluable to teaching the subject. All of the photographs in this report are from this collection.
As the Hobart and William Smith Colleges faculty representative on the 2005 Technos International trip to Japan, I selected a gift for Dr. Tanaka which I felt represented both a unique aspect of upstate New York art and culture and an unusual synthesis of the Japanese aesthetic with American Arts and Crafts. I commissioned one of the last living Roycroft craftsmen to create a leather table mat especially for Dr. Tanaka. Although this piece was made in East Aurora, New York, outside the city of Buffalo, it incorporates motifs which, unbeknownst to the craftsman, derive from nineteenth-century “Japonisme” – the influence of Japan art on Western art and architecture.
Indeed, on my first day in Japan, I noticed a similar design on the manhole covers in Tokyo! This leather table mat is a rare example of the durability of the influence that Japan has had on Western art and design for more than a century.

The Japanese influence on Western art can be seen in some of Vincent van Gogh’s paintings, but has also had a profound effect on architecture and design in Europe and in the United States – most notably on the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

Wright was first exposed to Japanese architecture when he saw the reproduction of the Phoenix Temple at the 1893 Chicago Exposition. This building strongly influenced Wright’s subsequent “Prairie Style” houses, such as the 1901 Willits house.

As an architectural historian, I knew of the influence of Japanese architecture on the Frank Lloyd Wright. However, it was not until I visited the Edo-Tokyo Open Air Architectural Museum with Technos College professor Kazuo Takayama that I realized that Wright had an equally profound influence on Japanese architecture, thus completing an East-West circle.
Our visit to Midori-No-Mura spa was a splendid experience. I especially enjoyed the visit and lecture by professor Takayama on the use of American construction methods at Midori-No-Mura, and looked with new interest at the many buildings that Technos students had constructed. Indeed, I felt that Midori-No-Mura is a valuable resource of building techniques. In addition to being a wonderful spa, it is an architectural museum in its own right. I would like to suggest that the Tanaka foundation consider restoring the delightful farmhouse at Midori-No-Mura as a fine example of traditional Japanese construction. I think that this modest building would make a fine addition to the unique collection of buildings at the property.

I greatly appreciated professor Takayama’s generosity in showing me some wonderful examples of Japanese architecture. I was especially touched by his farewell gift to me: a copy of a book on Japanese wood joinery. This is a real treasure for me, and I had the book bound with professor Takayama’s name on the cover!
I was deeply honored to be selected by the faculty group to give the farewell speech at Technos College. I hope that my remarks expressed our gratitude for the generosity of the Tanaka Foundation and the faculty and students of Technos College. My students and I have shared our experiences with other students and colleagues with great enthusiasm.

Speaking for myself, I experienced Japan in a way that I will never forget. It was truly the chance of a lifetime!

Dr. Stanley Mathews
Hobart and William Smith Colleges