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Kimono Exhibit to Open April 25 at IWU

Bloomington, Ill.—“The Kimono: Art, Dress, Society in Modern Japan from the Takayasu Collection,” opens April 25 at Illinois Wesleyan University. The exhibit, which runs through May 28, will be in the Merwin Gallery of the Joyce Eichhorn Ames School of Art, 302 E. Graham St., Bloomington.

The gallery’s hours are Monday through Friday 12-4 p.m., Tuesday 7-9 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday 1-4 p.m. There will be an opening reception on April 25, from 3-5 p.m. The exhibition is open to the public and free of charge.

The exhibition includes over 30 kimonos from a collection of more than 150 that Masako Takayasu has accumulated over several years. However, Takayasu points out that she does not consider herself a collector because the kimonos she owns are amassed from her family’s heirlooms and generous gifts from friends.

The exhibit was coordinated by Ellen Myers, assistant curator, and Takayasu’s friends, Helen McCalla, Marlys Stern, Katsue Tofukuji, Kathleen Loe former IWU School of Art curator, who made some of the initial selections, Sandra Fernandez, IWU’s current curator, and Masami Toku, who is also a kimono specialist from the University of Illinois.

According to Myers, kimonos will be displayed of various fabrics (rayon, cotton and silks), the wedding gown of Takayasu’s husband’s grandmother, the kimono that her uncle’s grandmother wove for a long-awaited son and special family crested formal

kimonos. The garments will range from kimonos made for religious ceremonies, infant kimonos, to wedding and funeral kimonos.

Kimonos have an important role in Japanese society. They represent the life of the Japanese, especially the Japanese women, and are gathered over a woman's lifetime. Sometimes kimonos are donated to a shrine or temple upon her death. Takayasu was forced to trade some of her kimonos for food in post-World War II Japan, which demonstrates their economic value.

Takayasu, an accomplished pianist, was born and raised in Tokyo. She is a concert supporter at the University of Illinois' Krannert Art Center in Urbana-Champaign, and formerly served on the board of the Bloomington-Normal Symphony. In 1994 Takayasu and her husband, Wako, along with Harry and Marlys Stern founded Cultural Ties, an organization that promotes international understanding through art.

"The Kimono: Art, Dress and Society in Modern Japan" presents an unparalleled opportunity for our students, faculty and the residents of Central Illinois to learn about the fusion of art and daily life in modern Japan," said Miles Bair, director of IWU's School of Art. "Visitors to the exhibition can study the techniques and craftsmanship of the kimono form first-hand. The treasures shared with us by Masako Takayasu are becoming increasingly rare. The level of craft reflected in the kimono exhibition might soon be lost to the demands of contemporary life in Japan. We are grateful to Mrs. Takayasu for sharing her love of traditional culture with Illinois Wesleyan and the Bloomington/Normal community."