

Life is Wabi-Sabi



Brian Tanimoto started his business in 1988 to help the community properly preserve and present their artwork and cherished possessions and over the years this business has evolved into Tanimoto Dharma Designs/Life is Wabi-Sabi, with retail, wholesale, and online sales of handmade, unique, inspirational artwork - framed prints, magnets, buttons, and t-shirts. The Hawai'i SBDC Network (SBDC) has been involved with Brian through his business transitions.

Life is Wabi-Sabi is a theme created by Brian and supported by a team who enjoy spreading a positive message of inspiration. Brian's daughter, Erynn, drew the anime cat in Wabi-Sabi's logo and products when she was 13 years old. Its kawaii (cute) and quirky looks embodied the concept of wabi-sabi, the simple, yet inspiring philosophy that "Life is Purr-fectly Imperfect". The drawing inspired the development of this brand, which focuses on embracing the imperfections of everyday life. Items are great for décor, gifts or anytime you want to share a little happiness with others.

When people enter Brian's retail shop in downtown Hilo, they are surprised to find a fascinating little store with inspiring, locally-made and designed items. In addition to the Wabi-Sabi cat items, there are Zen inspirational quotes, Japanese mini art, and other unique items, all surrounded with their signature lavender color. The lavender color was selected because it signified spirituality, calmness, and passion.

As gallery and frame sales began to wind down, Brian and his SBDC advisor agreed it was time to scale back and refocus attention on the sale of Life is Wabi-Sabi products. He partnered with his daughter, a graphic artist and computer guru, and consulted with a local marketing and graphic design company to perfect the branding of the Life is Wabi-Sabi theme and signature cat design. Together they are now pursuing new markets and products.

Through the years the SBDC assisted Brian with financial questions, improved his focus, business knowledge and marketing strategy and refined his profitability. "The SBDC consultant was my greatest cheerleader and a definite asset to my progress. I accepted and followed through on her advice, increasing my awareness of what it takes to be in business. I am grateful for SBDC's service and support."

