

Chinese Brush Painting

Goal

To use brush painting to create an asymmetrical composition that shows balance between the painted and empty space (yin-yang).

Criteria

- Create an asymmetrical composition, leaving at least 1/3 of the page empty.
- Use an uneven number of bamboo stems and leaves.
- Use at least two lines of different thicknesses.
- Use at least two shades of black/gray.

Materials

- Chinese bamboo brush
- Black ink (prepared by mixing equal parts of black tempera and water)
- White construction paper (9 x12) with red chops in upper right corner
- White paper for practicing brush strokes
- Paper towels
- Cup for ink
- Black pen or felt tip

Procedure

Practice Making Brushstrokes

1. Practice holding the brush slightly above the center of the handle between the thumb and the first two fingers. Let the handle rest against the other two fingers. Keep the brush upright. When making a line, the hand and arm move together as one unit; the wrist remains stationary.
2. Demonstrate how to load the brush with ink. To remove excess liquid and create a POINTED brush tip, carefully pull the brush across the lip of the ink container.
3. Using a practice paper, attempt to make sections of bamboo stems. Push the brush gently down as you move it along the paper, then slightly release the pressure as you continue to move the brush along. Press down slightly again before you lift the brush from the paper.
4. Now practice making lines of different thicknesses by using different parts of the brush. If using just the tip, the line will be at its thinnest. To achieve a thicker line, turn the brush slightly and use a little pressure as you move the brush along the paper.
5. Now practice making bamboo leaf shapes. This can be done either by making short, pendulum type motions with your brush or by pressing down on your brush to make a wide mark and then releasing it to make a narrow taper.

Painting Bamboo

1. Hold the paper vertically so that the chops and signature appear in the upper right hand corner.
2. Using a black pen or felt tip, have the child sign his/her name above, below, or inside the chop.

Art of China Hands-on Project

Revised 02/04 Page 15

3. Create an asymmetric composition by keeping most of the painting on one side of the work.
4. Draw the bamboo stem first, leaving space between segments. Usually this is done from the bottom upwards, with each successive segment appearing longer (as occurs in nature)
5. Add a thin horizontal line between the segments (optional)
6. Draw more bamboo stems if desired (an odd number). These may cross if desired, but they should all be on the same half of the page.
7. Create bunches of bamboo leaves on the stems. The leaves and number of clumps should also be in odd-numbered groups (as in 1, 3 or 5). Remind the children about the difference in growth patterns for old and new leaves.

For lower grades use only first 2 or 3 criteria.

Include 4th criterion for upper grades.

Clean Up

Please wash out the brushes thoroughly and re-point them so that they will be in good shape for the next class. Lay

them on a tray with a paper towel to dry.

Matting

Please mat finished work on black paper (size 12 x 18 in). The finished bamboo work should not be placed in the center of the black paper. The traditional spacing for matting allows for an unequal space above and below the painting. Above the painting symbolizes Heaven and should be wider than the space below the painting, which symbolizes Earth. The side margins symbolize the scene extending beyond the confines of the paper.

Art of China **Hands-on Project**

Revised 02/04 Page 16